THE NEIDHART PLAYS:
A SOCIAL AND THEATRICAL ANALYSIS

By
VICTOR RENARD COOK

A DISSERTATION PRESENTED TO THE GRADUATE COUNCIL OF
THE UNIVERSITY OF FLORIDA
IN PARTIAL FULFILLMENT OF THE REQUIREMENTS FOR THE
DEGREE OF DOCTOR OF PHILOSOPHY

UNIVERSITY OF FLORIDA
1969

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

Assistance from Mr. Jesse R. Jones, Jr., of the Graduate Research Library at the University of Florida is acknowledged and deeply appreciated.

To the members of his examining committee, Professors G. Paul Moore, C. Frank Karns, and James Lauricella, the writer offers his thanks.

He is particularly grateful to Professors Sarah Robinson of the Department of Anthropology and Melvin Valk of the Department of German, for the time they spent reading draft copies of this study. Their suggestions and advice concerning the sociological and philological aspects of the subject were invaluable.

Finally, the writer acknowledges the debt he owes Professor L. L. Zimmerman, the principle director of this study. Professor Zimmerman's patience, wisdom, and good humor made completion of this work possible.

TABLE OF CONTENTS

INTRODUCTION

The purpose of this study is to expose the social and theatrical significance of four of the five extant late medieval German dramatic works based on the legendary character of Neidhart. The works in question are the fourteenth century St. Paul Neidhart Play, the fifteenth century Greater Neidhart Play, Lesser Neidhart Play,[1] and Sterzing Scenario. The four plays have no known authors. The fifth play, Der Neidhart mit dem Feiel, written by Hans Sachs in the middle of the sixteenth century, is not considered in this study inasmuch as it belongs to the Renaissance rather than the medieval tradition.

The plays, along with a contemporary medieval legend titled Neidhart Fuchs, were based on the life and poetry of a thirteenth century poet, Neidhart von Reuental. Both the plays and the legend have roughly similar plots. The protagonist is a homeless knight, named Neidhart, who professes courtly love toward the Duchess of Austria. As proof of his love, he sets out on a quest for the first violet of spring. This spring violet was customarily plucked by the most beautiful lady in the land, and its discovery was proof that winter had passed and the joys of summer and love were near. In the plays, Neidhart is always successful in his quest. He finds the violet, addresses it tenderly, covers it with his hat, and then goes to

---

[1]Hereafter, the plays will be referred to as the St. Paul, the Greater Neidhart, and the Lesser Neidhart. These plays first appeared in a master's thesis by Victor R. Cook, "The Neidhart Plays: An Analysis and Translation of Three Medieval German Folk Dramas" (University of Florida, 1964). The Sterzing Scenario has not appeared in English translation to date.

fetch the Duchess and her entourage of maidens. A peasant chief named Engelmair, or one of his lieutenants, Elschenprecht, or Enzlman, has been secretly observing Neidhart. When Neidhart leaves to seek the Duchess, the peasant stealthily leaves his hiding place, lifts the hat, picks the violet, and then defecates on the spot where it stood. He then places Neidhart's hat on the feces and returns to his hiding place to see what will transpire. Neidhart returns with the Duchess who is beside herself with joy at the prospect of receiving the violet. When she lifts the hat, however, her joy turns to great sorrow or anger. She threatens Neidhart with death, banishment, or promises he will be shamed because of his insult to her. Neidhart, thus disgraced, vows he will punish the miscreant whom he knows somehow must be a peasant. In the meantime, the peasant miscreant has returned to Zeislmauer, the place where the peasants are celebrating the return of spring. His neighbors are overjoyed at his cleverness in bringing Neidhart into disgrace. Their joy, like that of the Duchess, is short-lived, however, because Neidhart arrives, often with armed companions, and proceeds to punish the peasants. In one version, he hangs two of them, then tricks the remainder into believing they are monks, at which point he shears their locks and confines them in a monestary, where devils are set loose on them. In all versions of the plays and in the printed version of the legend, the peasants are bound to "stilts" because Neidhart hacks off their left legs. The plays, with one exception, end with at least the presumption that Neidhart returns to a state of grace at the ducal court.

The Neidhart plays are worthy of study from both sociological and theatrical viewpoints. Their social significance is twofold. First, they

represent the expression of a portion of the late medieval world-view. Secondly, the plays stand as records of an older and ongoing social dilemma -- the conflict between peasant and warrior. The theatrical significance of the plays is considerable. The St. Paul is the earliest extant secular play in the German language. The Greater Neidhart is the longest medieval secular play in any language. The Lesser Neidhart is a typical fifteenth century fastnachtspiel, and the Sterzing Scenario is, to this writer's knowledge, the earliest secular prompt book from the medieval period. Thus, study from both view points is warranted.

Since the treatment of the plays in this study involves a considerable amount of medieval German history, the following brief historical outline is offered to orient the reader to the three historic periods which pertain to the analysis of the Neidhart plays.

The first history of the Germans is recorded in Julius Caesar's Memoirs of the Gallic War, published in 51 B.C. When Caesar fought the Germans, they had a primitive economy based on hunting, herding, and farming, with land being owned by family groups rather than by individuals. The second historical account available is Tacitus' Germania, published in 98 A.D. This work indicates that in the ensuing interval the Germans had become more adroit at farming, and also, their material wealth seems to have permitted a greater differentiation of labor. In addition, certain clans became more important than others. In terms of an individual's rank in society, a dual system of recognition appears to have been operative. Individuals could either be ranked on the basis of land and kinship, or on the basis of their prowess in war.

The Middle Ages traditionally begins in 410 A.D. with the "sack of Rome" by the Visigoths. With the advent of the Carolingian Dynasty of the ninth century, the warrior system of ranking took formal precedence over the land/kin based system. The beginning of the High Middle Ages and the feudal order is dated from this century. The High Middle Ages saw its peak in Germany during the reign of Fredrick I, Barbarossa (1152-1190), with the apogee of medieval German artistic activity occurring very shortly thereafter. The Poets Wolfram von Eschenbach (d. circa 1225), Walther von der Vogelweide (d. circa 1230), and Neidhart von Reuenthal (known from 1215 to 1236) span this period of excellence.

The last period considered here is the Late Middle Ages. It was marked by the dissolution of the feudal order and the shift from the Middle High German language to the Early New High German. The period opened with a political crisis known as the Interregnum which involved the seventeen year gap between the Hohenstaufen and Habsburg dynasties (1256-1273) and left the German states in complete shambles. In terms of artistic endeavor, the Late Middle Ages is known as the "silver age" of German literary art. The Neidhart apocrypha (spurious poetry attributed to the historical character Neidhart) was written during this period.

In the fourteenth century, the German social situation became more chaotic. Peasant coalitions took over Switzerland, a coalition of merchant city states called the Hanseatic League humbled the crown of Denmark, and knight and peasant coalitions attacked cities in Alsace. With respect to other events in the period, gunpowder was introduced to the science of warfare, the Black Plague decimated a quarter of the population of

Europe, an economic depression began, and the most astounding drunkard in history, the Good King Wenceslaus (d. 1410), ruled Germany during the last years of the century. A legend was also born about a knight named Neidhart Fuchs, "enemy of the Peasant," and the first of the plays considered here (the St. Paul) was written in the midst of this period.

Fifteenth century German history is a record of both crises and development. In terms of the former, between 1415 and 1417, the Church found itself without a pope, after having as many as three in the previous century. It was in this century also that Jan Hus, the Czech reformer, attacked Germany with mortars and horse-drawn tanks, and when he was burned at the stake, his general, Ziska, attacked anew. When Ziska, in turn, was slain in battle, it was rumored that his skin was flayed from his body by his followers and made into a war drum, the sound of which reputedly made German soldiers quake. In some states, fifteenth century Germans saw justice meted out by the Vehmic, courts which were secret tribunals composed of vigilantes. The end of the century, and of the Late Middle Ages, saw the beginning of humanism, the birth of the printing press, and the somewhat more stable political situation which prevailed during the Renaissance. The last three plays treated in this study were written during that portion of the fifteenth century in which the social situation might be said to have been least well-ordered.

The three historic periods outlined above show something of the social and political milieu which influenced the development of the Neidhart plays.

The plan of analysis of the four plays falls into two parts. Part

one exposes the social significance of the plays, and part two is concerned with the history and significance of the plays as works of art.[2] Each of the two parts contains three essays, which, respectively, identify pertinent historical and critical features of the plays.

The analytic method employed in the social analysis with which the first part of the study is concerned is an adaptation of Claude Lévi-Strauss' "Structural Analysis of Myth."[3] This approach, described in detail in Chapter one, resembles the pragmatic branch of semiotics in that it deals with the qualitative description of the latent content of communication. This method was deemed preferable to the traditional content analysis because the plays were not vehicles of overt propaganda. The quantitative description of the manifest content of communication, which is the goal of content analysis,[4] works best when the communication represents one viewpoint. The viewpoint in the plays under examination is unique, however, inasmuch as the Neidhart legend is a part of the "folk" tradition of the Late Middle Ages. That is, it had a general audience rather than an audience restricted to a given estate. Furthermore, taken as a corpus, the plays manifest conflicting and ambivalent tendencies which makes them difficult to analyze without referring to the underlying meanings. Moreover, the discrepency which becomes apparent when events of plays are compared

---

[2]Previous works which bear directly on the plays as works of art include Konrad Gusinde, Neidhart mit dem Veilchen in Germanistische Abhandlung, XVIII (Breslau, 1899), and F. Hintner, "Beiträge zur Kritik der deutschen Neidhartspiele des 14 und 15 Jahrhunderts" in Jahresbericht des Städt Gymnasiums (Wels, 1903-07). Both deal primarily with poetic and literary analysis and bear a tangential relationship to this study.

[3]Claude Lévi-Strauss, Structural Anthropology, tr. Claire Jacobson and Brook Grundfest Schoepf (New York, 1963). Lévi-Strauss applies this approach in "Four Winnebago Myths" in Culture in History, ed. Stanley Diamond (New York, 1960).

[4]Bernard Berelson, "Content Analysis" in Handbook of Social Psychology (Reading, Mass., 1954), p. 489.

with the nature of the historic moment make it necessary to interpret the various motifs found therein, for one cannot say that the events which occur in the plays generally happened or, in fact, ever happened at all. Knights did not mutilate peasants as a rule, as the earlier synopsis of the legend suggests, since there was a desperate need for the peasants' produce, and conversely, peasants certainly did not gratuitously insult armed men on horseback. The events in the plays, then, are not a reflection of what the situation actually was, but rather of what men imagined it to be.

The definition of the social situation contained or reflected in the plays did not directly reflect the material, economic, or social truth of the time. Nevertheless, it is important, for in the words of W. I. Thomas' famous aphorism, "If men define situations as real, they are real in their consequences."[5] If the plays had reflected directly and coherently what actually occurred in fourteenth and fifteenth century Germany, it would have been an incredible feat of sociology and history, if not of art, for according to the respected medievalists Strayer and Munro, the confused state of affairs which characterized the fourteenth and fifteenth centuries in Germany " . . . defies description."[6]

The structural analysis undertaken in this study reveals the form of a set of basic assumptions about the relationships of three pivotal social statuses: the duke, the knight, and the peasant in this, the waning of the Middle Ages.

---

[5]Social Behavior and Personality, ed. Edmund H. Volkart (New York, 1951), p. 81.

[6]Joseph Reese Strayer and Dana C. Munro, The Middle Ages, 4th ed. (New York, 1959), p. 502.

Before going on to a survey of Part Two of this work, a justification for the sociological approach to the study of art; especially dramatic art, will be submitted. This justification will discuss the kinds of information one can expect to obtain via the social analysis of art, what the limitations of that type of analysis are, and finally, factors limiting the amount of information one can derive from it.

Arnold Hauser, the noted art historian and authority on the social aspects of art, provides answers to the questions posed above in his discussion of the general topic of art and its relationship to society. He holds that art and society are mutually influential. Art works are not solely the product of individual imagination and experience, they are rather " . . . the outcome of at least three different types of conditions; psychological, sociological and stylistic."[7] Society itself is influenced by art in various degrees because of the use of art as an overt form of propaganda or because of the incidental credence on the part of the consumer in the basic assumptions found in the art work.[8] The information one can derive from the social study of art is an interpretation of natural and historical events as seen through the eyes of a representative individual of a group. One can discover their " . . . opinions and valuations of prestige and other social aims."[9] Among the other social aims one ought to consider is the necessity for the individual and the group to maintain adequate definitions of the situation in which they find

---

[7]Arnold Hauser, The Philosophy of Art History (New York, 1959), p. 13.

[8]Ibid., p. 7.

[9]Ibid., p. 21.

themselves. For while material interests are important to human beings, "the fundamental motive of human behavior is not self-preservation, but preservation of the symbolic self."[10] Social groups, speaking through a representative individual, express their symbolic selves in the form of a definition of their respective situations. An examination of art from a sociological viewpoint exposes, in part, the particular definition of the situation reached by the group examined.

Some of the limitations of the sociological approach to the study of art are immediately apparent. Questions concerning style and psychology are tangentially related to sociology. They act as co-factors in the final product since the individual psyche and the individual style are affected, but not determined, by social influence. As Hauser says, "all art is socially conditioned, but not everything in art is definable in sociological terms."[11] Other limitations of this mode of inquiry include the fact that artistic excellence is not definable in sociological terms,[12] and conversely, popularity, which is distinctly a social phenomenon, has no correlation with artistic merit.[13]

The final aspect of the social study of art which must be considered here is the relative amount of information one can derive from particular forms of art. Three general factors seem to affect the informative potential of a genre.

---

[10]S. I. Hayakawa, Symbol, Status, and Personality (New York, 1963), p. 37.

[11]Hauser, The Philosophy, p. 8.

[12]Ibid., p. 8.

[13]Ibid., p. 10.

The first of these factors has to do with the relative degree of reactance of the form to its social milieu, social reactance being a function of the social distance of a cultural construct. For example, instrumental music has a greater distance from its social origin than does epic poetry. The degree of social/ideological saturation is less in the former and more in the latter artistic genre. The theatre and its associated literary form traditionally have the least social distance of all the arts since it deals most often with the illusion of interacting human beings. Thus, from a sociological standpoint, dramatic literature has a relatively high informative value.

The second factor affecting the sociological value of an art work is the degree to which it tends toward popular, or toward esoteric appeal. The highly informative art work is that one which pleases the broadest portion of society. There are, of course, some works of art which are "great" in a critical sense, but which are appreciated by a very few people. The social analyst, therefore, finds his richest source of information in those works which are highly prized by a mass audience, rather than in those works which are appreciated by a few, however cultivated that few may be.

The final factor which determines the informative value of a work of art concerns the degree to which the work is traditional, or to which it tends to be innovative. Simply put, the sociological value of a popular work of art increases proportionally to the amount of time the work enjoys popularity. A myth or folktale is a rationalization of the fundamental and enduring needs of a society,[14] and as such, warrants more

[14]Clyde Kluckhohn, "Myths and Rituals: A General Theory" in Harvard Theological Review, XXXV (1942), 78-79.

attention than does the art object which has a momentary burst of popularity, however brilliant.

The analysis of the Neidhart plays from a sociological viewpoint is trebly justified: first, as dramatic works they are socially reactive; secondly, they, as well as the legend with which they were associated, were created for a popular audience rather than for a select few; finally, they are traditional rather than innovative works. Thus, one could expect that a considerable amount of information would result from a sociologically-based examination of the subject plays.

In Part Two of this study, the plays will be examined as art objects. The first item to be considered will be the theatrical origins of the plays (Chapter Four). In Chapter Five, all four plays will be subjected to a descriptive analysis, and in the final chapter, an exposition of the probable modes of their production will be given.

The history of the theatrical origins of the Neidhart plays, of necessity, will be one which is tentatively offered because of the paucity of primary evidence pertaining to the plays, or to any other type of secular drama during the period considered.

In the descriptive analysis of the plays (Chapter Six), the usual critical approaches which seek to explain drama in terms of archetypical patterns, artist's intentions, metaphors, or architectonic structure have been rejected in favor of the general approach of R. S. Crane and the so-called Chicago school of criticism. This critical position, simply put, isolates and defines the underlying formulative principles in a given art work as a whole. In this approach, neither particular portions, nor

inferred universal properties, of the art work obscures the critic's task of describing the art form per se.[15] The application of this approach to the Neidhart plays will demonstrate that the least well organized of the plays possesses more coherence than would be generally supposed.

The final chapter offers suggestions concerning the manner in which the plays may have been produced. The staging practices and spatial organization of the several productions are examined, and the relationship of the Greater Neidhart and the Sterzing Scenario to productions of religious dramas and the para-theatrical tournament will be exposed.

The bases for the historical, dramatic, and theatrical analysis which constitutes Part Two of the study were chosen because they complement rather than duplicate those found in Part One. They also avoid, for the most part, the concerns of previous works on the Neidhart plays.

Ultimately, the purpose of this study is to say what hasn't yet been said about the Neidhart plays of the Late Middle Ages.

---

[15]R. S. Crane, The Languages of Criticism and the Structure of Poetry (Toronto, 1953), pp. 184-185.

PART ONE

THE SOCIAL SIGNIFICANCE OF THE NEIDHART PLAYS.

CHAPTER ONE

The Neidhart Plays as Social Documents

This chapter will establish and discuss that portion of the late medieval world view which is implicit in the Neidhart plays. It will be shown that this world view, or definition of the situation as it will be referred to hereafter, while not a particularly realistic one, functioned to inculcate, integrate, and validate social value sets.[1] The analysis which follows will identify the social message of the Neidhart plays and establish its relationship to the real social situation in which the plays existed.

The analytic method employed here is derived from the structural approach to the study of culture devised, for the most, by the French anthropologist Claude Lévi-Strauss. In a collection of essays entitled Structural Anthropology, Lévi-Strauss describes his heuristic structural approach as being concerned ". . . primarily with universals, that is the basic social and mental processes of which cultural institutions are the concrete external projections or manifestations."[2] The design for cultural analysis put forward by Lévi-Strauss represents a departure from traditional ethnographic-historical culture studies.[3]

---

[1] William R. Bascom, "The Four Functions of Folklore" in The Study of Folklore, ed. Alan Dundes (Englewood, N. J., 1965), pp. 292-294.

[2] Lévi-Strauss, Structural Anthropology, p. ix.

[3] Ibid., pp.14-16.

To better understand the basis of the analytic method employed in this chapter, therefore, the following comparison of the goals of the structural anthropologist and the historian is offered.

> The issue can thus be reduced to the relationship between history and ethnology in the strict sense. We propose to show that the fundamental difference between the two disciplines is not one of subject, of goal, or of method. They share the same subject, which is social life; the same goal, which is a better understanding of man; and, in fact, the same method, in which only the proportion of research techniques varies. They differ, principally, in their choice of complementary perspectives: history organizes its data in relation to conscious expressions of social life, while anthropology proceeds by examining its unconscious foundations.[4]

In the study being presented here, the motifs and events of the literature provide the raw data from which the aforementioned "universals" are derived. These motifs and events form what Lévi-Strauss calls gross constituent units or mythemes.[5] The true building blocks of myth, however, are found in the "bundles" or categories in which the mythemes exist. The structure of the myth or dramatic work is determined by the relationship which exists between those categories.

Procedurally, to establish mythic structure in the manner undertaken in this chapter, it is necessary, first, to reduce the work or works to mythemes.[6] Secondly, the mythemes are displayed in a matrix which is generated horizontally by the narrative line of the plays' development, and vertically, by the categories of mythemes.[7] Thirdly,

---

[4] Ibid., p. 18

[5] Ibid., p. 211.

[6] Ibid., p. 212.

[7] Ibid., pp.215-216.

the categories are labeled in such a way that the fourth step, a statement of relationship between the categories, is possible.[8]

If the analysis of the works is restricted to the sociological viewpoint, the most difficult step is to determine which portion of the detailed business of a play or myth is socially significant. That difficulty increases if the work is culturally and/or temporally distant from the analyst. For instance, if the script calls for a certain group of characters, say peasants, to dance, a decision must be reached in terms of whether that dance is a simple interlude between episodes or whether it is, in fact, an elaborate parody of the dance of the higher social class, the aristocracy. Of course, it could be both. The value of structural analysis from a cultural or social viewpoint, therefore, is directly proportional to the knowledge the analyst has of the subject culture.

The process of distributing the mythemes in a two-dimensional matrix (Step Two) is begun by placing the mytheme first encountered in the narrative in the upper left hand of the matrix. The next mytheme is placed to the right of the first unless it is found to be in the same category, in which case it would be placed below the initial similar mytheme. The rest of the mythemes are treated in a like fashion until they are distributed throughout the matrix. The third step consists of labeling the vertical columns within the matrix. The labels must permit a general statement concerning the relationship of the clusters.

The fourth step in the analysis involves the formulation of a

---

[8] Ibid.

statement relative to the relationship between the clusters of significant events. In this step, maintenance of a consistent analytical standpoint is vital to the production of useful information. While, conceivably, it may be possible to discover psychologically and philosophically significant patterns among the clusters as well as those which are purely sociological, the mixture of the three in one statement of relationship will confuse rather than illuminate analysis.

The Neidhart dramas lend themselves to the kind of structural analysis outlined above inasmuch as the narrative is traditional and, of the four variations of the central myth represented in the plays, at least one of the plays is long enough and repetitious enough to disclose the underlying structure.

The first cluster of mythically significant events in the Neidhart plays is the salute or vaunt. The salute is the verbal expression of the status relationship between the speaker and his auditor. The vaunt differs from the salute in that it is usually said prior to some form of aggressive behavior. For example, a knight in the Lesser Neidhart proclaims:

> I am a young strong knight.
> I am so filled with gall
> To fight with them is my fancy.
> I'll strike the four rude peasants
> At both their heels and heads
> So they lie before me like split logs.
> (227, 195, 13)[9]

---

[9]References in the text to specific lines in the St. Paul, Lesser Neidhart, and Greater Neidhart will be followed, first, by the page number in the appendix on which the line appears, then by a margin number which corresponds to the source page, and, finally, by the line number. References to the Sterzing Scenario will consist of the page and margin numbers since most of the speeches in that work are incomplete.

The St. Paul play opens with the Proclamator's salute to the ladies and gentlemen in the audience. In turn, the Duchess salutes Neidhart, and Neidhart, after finding the violet, salutes the Duchess. The Greater Neidhart play begins with a similar salute or direct address:

> Princes, counts, so be you;
> Lords, knights, and noble heirs.
> Also shopkeepers, who can handsomely
> Affect a high fashion,
> And therefore be well born.
> (162, 393, 6)

In the Lesser Neidhart all but a few lines involve the use of the vaunt. Moreover, the same vaunts are heard in the Sterzing Scenario prior to the tournament between the knights and peasants. The importance of this mytheme is evidenced by both its elaboration and frequency of occurance.

The next two categories of mythemes include a series of highly repetitious events which expose the diametric opposition of the knights and the peasants. The dance scenes in the Greater Neidhart are the best example of this structural element. First, after a series of gracious invitations to dance, the knights and the maidens dance the courtly round. Immediately afterward, the peasants enter the playing area and, after much cruder invitations to participate, they do a grotesque version of the same dance. In contrast to the knights who win the hearts of their beloved maidens with courtly discourse, the peasants charm their serving maids with lewd suggestions. Other scenes and speeches confirm this contrast between the fortunes and characteristics of the two statuses. For example, in the Greater Neidhart play, Lucifer notes that:

> They (the peasants) diminish
> The nobles every day.
> The peasants rise
> And the knighthood falls
> As you have just been told.
> (200, 439, 31)

He continues:

> But from this day
> On the earth
> There shall be no proper peace
> Between the peasants and the knights.
> (202, 441, 21)

Similarly, the stage directions in the Sterzing Scenario call for a series of peasant-knight physical confrontations. Thus, the diametric opposition of the two statuses is expressed in physical terms as well as literarily.

The next structurally significant cluster of events are the repetitious cases of mistaken identity or misjudgements. These include Neidhart's act of mistaking feces for a violet. In one instance, he is accused by a courtly maiden of being unable to "tell a turd from a violet" (225, 195, 5), while others accuse him of playing a joke on the Duchess. In either case, he is guilty of poor judgement. The peasants, in turn, are equally unable to estimate their situation correctly. Indeed, Neidhart deceives them time and again. In the Sterzing Scenario he deceives them by posing as a peasant, while in the Greater Neidhart the peasants mistake him for a sword sharpener, a monk, and finally for a fallen nobleman who would be their ally. In the monastery sequence of the latter play, the peasants don't even know who they themselves are. Similarly, in the Lesser Neidhart play, on one occasion the peasants mistook Neidhart for a doctor inasmuch as "Once at a fair/ . . . /he/ sold us a salve/ Which made our bellies swell" (228, 196, 4). It is clear that peasants and knights share this inability to make sound judgements.

In contrast to the cluster of significant incidents involving lack of judgement on the part of both the knights and peasants, the Duke and

Duchess appear to be fully capable of accurate discrimination. They weigh and balance evidence pertaining to any concern and make just and reasonable decisions. For example, it is the Duke or Duchess who consider Neidhart's merits or apparent lack of them and first condemn, and then forgive, him. Proof of the discrimination which inheres in, or is attributed to, the ducal court is provided by the fact that not even a decision about the propriety of conducting courtly love is left to the knights; they must appeal to the court for a decision (171, 404, 15). An instance which clearly reveals the contrasting jural authority of the Duke occurs when the peasants bring suit against Neidhart for the injury of two of their company. The Duke rules against them because of their obvious bias, stating,

> Gentlemen, I tell you thus,
> You have a great hate and envy for him.
> You love him not a wit.
> You have done him much evil.
> (192, 429, 10)

In essence, the mytheme revealed above involves the opposition of the landed aristocracy and the peasant and knight statuses. The last of the structurally significant cluster of events is that which involves "binding legs to wood." In all of the plays, reference is made to the mutilations of peasant's legs. In the St. Paul, Greater Neidhart, and Sterzing Scenerio, the mutilated legs are immediately replaced with wooden prosthetic devices. In the Lesser Neidhart, Engelmair, the peasant chieftain who is Neidhart's principle rival, incongruously enters on stilts (stelzen = stilts and/or prosthetic legs). The importance of this peculiar practice as an element in the covert structural message is undeniable. There are more than ten separate references to binding peasants to wood; moreover, the actual or threatened mutilations occur at pivotal points

in the dramatic narrative. For instance, the last line of the St. Paul reads: "As forfeit you must leave a leg here/ And go home on stilts" (161, 370, 57). In the other three plays, the mutilation of the peasants is the pivot point about which Neidhart's fortunes turn. For instance, in the Greater Neidhart both the fifth knight and Lucifer gloat over this peculiar punishment which Neidhart metes out to the peasants.

> The Fifth Knight. . . . Neidhart was not happy
> And he contrived so
> That he punished them well.
> Thus he broke
> Thirty-two of their left legs.
> They must without exception
> Creep on stilts and crutches.
> (187, 424, 5)

> Lucifer. They/thepeasants/ say: I never thought
> He would make a full thirty-two cripples.

The importance of this mytheme in the plays is confirmed by the fact that the legend of Neidhart Fuchs contains this incident and, in addition, the legend manuscript has wood cuts depicting the scene immediately after the mutilation.[10]

The matrix formulated from the six clusters of mythically significant events found in the Neidhart plays is presented in Figure 1. A label has been provided at the bottom of each file of mythemes in the matrix to indicate the significance of that file.

In the matrix, the highly repetitious vaunts and salutes have been interpreted as an expression of an elaborate concern for status (see the foot of file one). With respect to the term status, it sociologically indicates a particular position within a social structure. In modern

---

[10]Felix Bobertag, ed., Narrenbuch in Deutsche National Litteratur, XI (Stuttgart, 1885), 189.

FIGURE ONE

Vaunts+ and Salutes	Courtly Dances	Peasant dances			
	Neidhart+ covers the violet	Peasant+ defecates on violet	Feces+ mistaken for violet	Duchess+ condemns Neidhart	
	Knights+ attack peasants	Peasants attack knights	Neidhart mistaken for someone else		Legs+ bound to wood
				Peasant* suit before Duke	
	Engelmair* is killed			Duke or Duchess pardons Neidhart	
		Neidhart* is killed			

Great concern with status	Knights and peasants opposed and inversely related in fortunes and desirable characteristics	Inability to make sound judgements	Facility to make sound judgements	The panacea

*Appears in but one version
+Appears in all versions

law, and in societies which are organized into estates, a status is defined by a set of rights and obligations.[11] Since the particular rights and obligations of a status were to a great extent locally defined in the Middle Ages, a vaunt or salute which identified the origin of the speaker, as when a peasant announced he was Mayr von Prunnan, told the audience not only who the individual was but what he was.

The second and third files of the matrix express the differences and inverse relationship which was thought to exist between the statuses knight and peasant. In each play, these differences are made manifest by word and deed. Instances which best illustrate the polarity of the two statuses can be found in the Greater Neidhart play and the Sterzing Scenerio. In the former, Engelmair, the peasant chief, dies[12] and the play ends with a strong statement of Neidhart's good fortune. In the latter play, Neidhart dies and presumably the peasants can proceed with their festival without further aggravation. The idea that whatever helps a peasant must hurt a knight and vice versa is clearly and profoundly expressed.

In the fourth and fifth files of the matrix, a set of contrasting motifs is presented. Essentially, the peasants and knights consistently make poor judgements while the Duke and Duchess make accurate judgements with facility. It should be remembered also that the blatant stupidity of the peasants is matched in degree, if not kind, by Neidhart's mistake

---

[11] Concerning the confusing history of the term status, see Paul Bohannon, Social Anthropology (New York, 1963), p. 155, 165-166.

[12] Texts of both plays are vague about both deaths. At one point Engelmair is pronounced dead (216, 457, 31); at another he seems to be recovering (215, 458, 15). In the Sterzing Scenario, the directions indicate the actor playing Neidhart leaves the barrel before it is hacked open (251, 262), but subsequent lines seem to suggest that the illusion of his demise was intended.

with the violet which makes him an extremely ludicrous character.[13] The Duke and Duchess, on the other hand, issue their decisions with gravity and decorum. Although mythemes two and three show the knights and peasants being opposed, mythemes four and five indicate they possess a common incapacity -- the poor judgement which distinguished them from the Duke and Duchess.

The last of the matrix categories is labeled the panacea. This label was deemed appropriate inasmuch as, invariably, the solution to the problems in the plays involves hacking off a peasant's leg and then binding him to wood. The insistent quality of this mytheme is as great as it is puzzling. As early as the time of the historical character Neidhart von Reuental (early thirteenth century), reference is made to knocking peasants off their stilts.[14] After the relationships between the other categories are made clear, an extended discussion of this motif will be provided.

The process of providing a statement concerning the relationship of the mytheme categories requires more qualification than do the preceeding three steps in the structural analysis. While it is reasonable to assume that two individuals equally well-versed in the history of the subject culture could arrive at the same configuration of mythemes within the matrixes, there is unfortunately no assurance that their interpretation of the data thus derived will be the same. A case in point can be seen in Levi-Strauss's model analysis of the Oedipus myth. In his analysis of that myth, the fourth and final column of the matrix contains proper names

---

[13]This scene becomes quite amusing in Hans Sachs' play on Neidhart. This sixteenth century version ridicules all of the statuses included in the traditional narrative including the Duke and Duchess.

[14]Moriz Haupt, Neidhart's Lieder, 2nd ed. with revisions by Edmund Wiessner (Leipzig, 1923), p. 104.

which all refer to lameness (Labdaoes, Laios, and Oedipus). Lévi-Strauss interprets this as the "persistance of the autochthonius nature of man."[15] Without debating the specific merits of this interpretation, one can point out that this same motif would be regarded by the late British mythologist, Lord Raglan, as the ritual wounding of the God King.[16] When one assumes Raglan's point of view, an equally consistent statement concerning the relationship of the mytheme categories of the Oedipus myth is possible. The problem generated by the possibility of two different, but valid, statements based on the same data is that of achieving a cogent statement concerning the relationship of the various structural elements with some degree of certainty regarding its correctness.

It may be that judgements concerning the relationship of matrix categories cannot be made with absolute certainty by anyone and that, at best, only a tentative explanation can be offered. It seems reasonable to assume, however, that the probability of achieving a correct state of the relationship of structural elements within an artifact or work of art is enhanced in direct proportion to the general knowledge of the culture possessed by the analyst. In addition, the validity of the analytical data can be enhanced by consistency of the investigator's approach. As a consequence, this study employs a strict sociological approach in the hope of yielding a strictly sociological structural statement. In any case, it behooves the analyst to explain carefully why alternate interpretations do not fit.

---

[15] Lévi-Strauss, Structural Anthropology, p. 215.

[16] Lord Raglan, The Hero (London, 1949), p. 192.

The following identification of the relationships between the structural elements takes cognizance of the above considerations. Considering these relationships, it would appear reasonable that the elaborate concern for status (file one) is caused by the paradoxical social situation suggested in files two through four. The other alternative, however, is that the relationship between file one and the two pairs of oppositions was reflexive. Elaborate concern with status may have exacerbated and widened the differences between the statuses.

If file one suggests simply that a problem exists, files two through four define the nature of the problem in the form of a paradox. Those who are absolutely divided by the inverse relationship of their personal qualities and fortunes are, nevertheless, united in that neither possesses the facility to make accurate judgements. An alternate statement concerning the relationship of files two through four might be that the two statuses are divided because they lack the ability to make sound judgements. The final file, number five, contains the solution to the problem defined in files two through four. If the problematic metaphor is abandoned, it could be said that "binding legs to wood" is the resolution to the situation described in the previous files.

Before any comprehensive statement can be made about the structure of the works as a whole, the meaning of the last file must be decoded. While the meanings of the other files are relatively straightforward, the process of "binding legs to wood" appears to have no meaning at all. Of course, if the paradox were solvable by logical or sociological means, it is doubtful that a myth would have been generated. The search for meaning,

therefore, can only be directed toward what inevitably must be an unreasonable, but mythically satisfying, solution to the problem.

The mythic source of satisfaction of that problem may well inhere in a system of symbolism found in the plays. Each of the social statuses have symbolic analogues which are interjected into the formulation of the narrative much as algebraic symbols are in an equation. In passing, it might be noted that this interpolation of symbols for men creates puns of dubious humor. The first and most clear union of a symbol and a status is that involving feces and peasant. Manure is the substance with which the peasants worked. Manure, in medieval Germany, was an extremely valuable commodity (which was nevertheless held in very low esteem). Such was the case with the peasants. The second symbol is the violet which is said to be the judge or proof of spring. It is termed "powerful" and "noble" (178, 413, 28). Elsewhere, it is seen as proof that winter is passed (176, 411, 1). By virtue of these attributes, it is the symbolic analogue of the Duke and Duchess. It has power, prestige, and jural authority. It stands as the mediator between polar opposites. The last status, the knight, is less certainly represented by a symbol. Of the symbols available, "wood" seems to be the most logical. The sacred grove and the framm (wooden javalin) were associated with the ancient initiation rites of the young warriors.[17] Furthermore, in the plays the peasants attack a wood post to show what they would do if they caught Neidhart (219, 462, 1).

---

[17]Tacitus Germania ix. 2. xii. 1; Annales ii. 12. iv. 73; Historiae iv. 14.

The aforementioned symbols are integrated into the plot via a series of puns or through partially congruent interrelationship with the "real" elements of the play. When the feces is dropped under Neidhart's helmet, he is receiving his feudal due. In symbolic respects, the peasant was giving himself. When Neidhart observes that a great blow can separate one from one's ankle (217, 459, 15) he may be saying, metaphorically, that one can be deprived of one's progeny. That possibility is suggested by the fact that, in German, the word for leg is bein. Bein also means bone. Further, there is clear evidence that the Germans recorded kin by bone terminology. Colaterals extended from the neck to fingertips and there is some evidence that lineal relatives were reckoned vertically.[18] If the term bein was associated with kin ties and various bones of the leg represented one's progeny, then cutting one's leg (bein) would connote disrupting one's kin ties (which at least among the Norse would be tantamount to enslavement).[19] Viewed in this light, the act of "binding to wood" would homeopathically oblige the bound peasant to the knight whom the wood symbolized.

Pursuing the study of symbolic integration further, it should be noted that although the late medieval society was not organized around actual kinship ties, fictive kin terms were used to indicate close coalition. Regenbart is called Vetter, a word which once meant any male

---

[18] Bohannon, Social Anthropology, p. 127. The French spoke of "charnal brotherhood," see Marc Bloch, Feudal Society (Chicago, 1961), p. 124. A grandson was an enkel which is cognate to the English "uncle." Occationally a grandchild was called diehter (upper thigh), G. S. Ghurye, Family and Kin in Indo-Europe Culture (Bombay, 1962), p. 234.

[19] Frederick Seebohm, Tribal Custom in Anglo-Saxon Law (London, 1911), p. 266.

relative sprung from ego's paternal grandparents,[20] or Gefater (godfather). Moreover, godfathers were thought to be able to transmit character qualities to their godchildren. Neidhart is called Oheim by his followers (Honored Uncle, once reserved for ego's mother's brother).[21]

The disruption of the fictive kin coalitions and the subsequent binding of the peasant to the knight solves the paradox posed by the plays' elements. It must be remembered that though the peasants were not bound to Neidhart, both the peasants and the knights were bound to the Duke, hence the Duke has the dual attributes of power and privilege and the concomitant ability to make sound judgements. If the knights and peasants were to unite, however, their union would possess all of the qualities needed to "hold court."

A statement concerning the structural meaning of the Neidhart plays now becomes possible. Elaborate concern with status was caused by the paradoxical social situation in which peasants were absolutely opposed to knights. The peasants and knights were alike, however, in that they both were opposed to Dukes. That opposition was fostered by the fact that neither the knights or peasants could lay claim to being a whole status. The solution to the paradox, a solution couched in symbolism, is that the two half statuses (knights and peasants) might unite and thus achieve the possibility of a full round of existence (subsistence and privilege).

It was suggested in the introduction to this portion of the analysis that the definition of the social situation which is implicit in the

---

[20]Ghurye, Family and Kin, pp. 235-239.

[21]Ibid., p. 236.

Neidhart plays was not realistic. In fact, it bears nothing but a tangential relationship to the actual situation found in Germany in the Late Middle Ages. Since myths and other imaginative narratives are often thought to directly reflect the social situation in which they exist, some attention must be given to the factors which cause individuals and societies to adopt patently false notions about their circumstances. That information will make it be possible to discover why the aforementioned panacea was couched in symbolism, and establish the precise relationship of the plays to their environment.

The mythopoeic and dramatic impulses operative on the social level have analogues at the level of the individual. People act out their illusory definitions of the situation. Reasons for the adoption of a false definition of a given situation are suggested by the results of a recent experimental study by contemporary sociologist Peter McHugh who deliberately exposed subjects to a disorienting social experience. Although the subjects were given an idea of what was to occur, in the course of the experiment it became abundantly clear to a number of them that what was happening did not coincide with their expectations. Specifically, McHugh noted the following patterns of behavior:

1. After the disorienting experience, the anomic behavior of the subjects fell into three categories. The first was characterized by a feeling of powerlessness, the second by a feeling of being out of place, and the third by a feeling of meaninglessness.[22]

---

[22]Defining the Situation (Indianapolis, 1968), p. 120.

2. The protocol of those experiencing feelings of powerlessness and of being out of place were orderly. Feelings of meaninglessness were absolutely disruptive.[23]

3. Nearly one-third of the subjects experiencing anomia reinvoked their original definition of the situation. Over half of those experiencing the meaningless variety of anomia reinvoked the original definition.[24]

This would indicate that orderly behavior on the part of the individual is dependent upon his ability to give a coherent account of his surroundings. The trueness or falseness of his particular definition makes no difference. If the individual is to function, he must construct an integrative rationale. It is equally important to notice that there seems to be some propensity to reinvoke the original assessment of the situation.

On the sociatal level, analogous processes occur when the society as a whole undergoes change. Clyde Kluckholn points out that myth and ritual are devices by which cultures adapt and adjust to stress.[25] Myth supplies a rationale for, and dramatization (ritual) acts out, the conflicts and the solutions which are typical of a society.

Although myth and ritual are related in the above-mentioned sense, one is not the cause of the other.[26] Dramatization has its own reason for being. In terms of the case materials of this study, the legend of Neidhart Fuchs provided a rationalization for the social order, or dis-

---

[23]Ibid., p. 103.

[24]Ibid., p. 119.

[25]"Myth and Rituals," p. 78.

[26]Ibid., p. 56.

order in this case, of fifteenth century Germany. The plays rooted in that legend would, essentially, act out and thereby reinforce the organizing principle of the late medieval world view. An exhaustive cross-cultural study of initiation ceremonies conducted by Frank W. Young would suggest that it is quite in order to assign a role or function such as this to these fifteenth century dramatizations. Specifically, Young's study concludes:

> Dramatization is the communication strategy typically employed by solidarity groups in order to maintain their highly organized but all the more vulnerable definitions of the situation.[27]

Dramatization, then, acts in defense of the status quo. The institutional state of solidarity, and its rationalization in the form of a myth, are maintained by dramatization. The Neidhart plays are an instance which suggests a corollary proposition, to wit, dramatization is the communication strategy typically employed by societies in order to maintain a minimum level of organization of their definition of the situation. A dramatic imperative exists at both organizational extremes. The highly organized solidarity group, and the poorly organized institution or society, use drama to intensify the mythic and social bonds which characterize them. The anomic social situation requires dramatization to establish or reestablish a minimum level of social-psychological coherence.

The necessity for a coherent account of one's environment and the function of myth and dramatization in filling that need explains, in

---

[27] Initiation Ceremonies: A Cross Cultural Study of Status Dramatization (Indianapolis, 1965), p. 3.

part, why the previously identified panacea was couched in symbolism. Open advocacy of a knight-peasant union would obviously alarm the aristocracy and perhaps cause the advocate to lose his head. It might be posited, also, that the major impetus toward that symbolism came from a less obvious, but more compelling, set of circumstances.

In the period in which the Neidhart legend and plays evolved, union of the knight and the peasant statuses was socially inconceivable. Hildi Hügle, in Der deutsche Bauer im Mittelalter, knows of but three instances in which knight-peasant coalitions occurred. These associations, which were brief, occurred in Alsace (1336), Gotha (1391), and Worms (1431).[28] Interestingly enough, these unions were not directed against the plays' third status (the Duke), but against the new middle class in the cities. These instances to the contrary, knight-peasant associations were generally impossible; the only conceivable way in which a peasant could be united with the knight was via the traditional feudal bond. Yet in the Late Middle Ages, this too was impossible because there had been a shift in the major economic and political patterns of organization. A transition had been made from fief to indenture.[29] The nexus of social interaction was placed in the market-place of the cities, rather than the courts of the lesser nobility.[30] Exploitation of the peasants continued with as much vigor as in former days, but rent and taxation were

---

[28]In Sprache und Dichtung, XLII (Stuttgart, 1885), 2-3.

[29]Bryce D. Lyon, From Fief to Indenture (Cambridge, Mass., 1957), p. 1.

[30]James Westfall Thompson, Economic and Social History of Europe in the Later Middle Ages (New York, 1960), pp. 126-130.

the new means of achieving the ancient end. Furthermore, the fundamental mode of social organization was shifting from the estate system, which was composed of legally defined statuses with definite sets of rights and obligations, to a class system. In the latter, theoretically at least, all men would have the same rights before the law. They were grouped, however, by equally theoretic differences in traits. The panacea contained in the plays was, in fact, an impossible solution.

The solution which the panacea offered was false. More than that, the problem it purported to solve was unrealistic in both form and content. The oversimplified and nearly mechanical relationships between the subject statuses did not in fact exist. Moreover, the central issue of the plays was, in itself, an evasion of the principal, and very real, problem which faced the age.

The falseness of the Neidhart definition of the situation is best seen in the simplistic sets of social relationships it sets forth. First of all, the fortunes of the knights and peasants were not really unalterably opposed. Since the economy of the whole culture was still largely agrarian based, what was bad for a peasant was for the most part bad for everyone. Peasants and laborers were so scarce that a law was passed forbidding people to be idle.[31] The demand for productive people was so great that the laborers, flattered by all of this attention, attempted to establish the first five-day work week. "Montag ist Sontag's bruder,"[32] as the saying went. It is certain that knights did not go

---

[31] Ibid., p. 390.

[32] Ibid., p. 391.

about needlessly mutilating peasants in such hard times.[33]

A further indication of this inaccurate definition of the situation can be found when the actual power and privileges of the ducal courts are considered. The serene Duke, who possessed power and prestige in contrast to the half statuses of knight and peasant, did not actually possess or enjoy the authority which was his ancient right. The cities, and the city patriciate, the upper-middle class, challenged the authority of the aristocracy at every point. In fact, the idea that the serious social conflict in this era was between knight and peasant is itself an evasion of the central and fundamental problem facing fourteenth and fifteenth century Germany. The real battles were between the upper and lower classes of the cities[34] and between the cities and the aristocracy.[35]

The fact that the plays put forth a type conflict and a type solution which bore no relationship to the real vicissitudes besetting the audiences stems, in a circular fashion, from the chaotic and insoluble nature of those same circumstances. The actual situation was, as Strayer and Munro say, too chaotic to describe; hence, a totally unrealistic definition of the situation in the form of the Neidhart legend. By virtue of this definition, life could have meaning and the possibility of orderly behavior could be assumed. The dramatization of this legend provided confirmation and intensification of the weak bonds formed by the demonstrably oversimplified and largely false definition which was implicit within it.

---

[33]It should not be assumed that peasants were spared the ravages of the wars which were constantly being waged. Indeed, whole villages disappeared in the worst of those conflicts. There was, however, no systematic persecution of the peasant as a class.

[34]J. W. Thompson, Economic and Social History, pp. 398-414.

[35]Geoffrey Barraclough, The Origins of Modern Germany (Oxford, 1949).

It is interesting to note in passing that the behavior of both Neidhart and the peasants falls within the anomic categories posited by McHugh. Neidhart, who is privileged but without power, assaults the peasants and bewails his situation. The experimental subjects, who had comparable feelings, reacted similarly to their situation.[36] The peasants on the other hand are powerful but without privilege. They feel out of place, as well they might since economics and their own ambitions had moved them from their customary social situation. They assault Neidhart as an individual, rather than the knighthood as a class or the situation per se. This is precisely the kind of behavior McHugh discovered was typical of subjects experiencing feelings of alienation.[37]

In conclusion, it has been shown that the Neidhart plays are socially significant works of dramatic art even though they bear but a tangential relationship to the true social situation in Germany during the last portion of the Middle Ages. The structural analysis of the plays reveals a covert, but genuine, anxiety about status. It also disclosed the nature of the problem as the people of that era saw it. A symbolic remedy, which in fact was no remedy at all, provided a solution, albeit removed by one level of abstraction, to the paradoxical situation defined in the mid-portion of the structure of the plays. The relationship of the plays to their environment has been shown to be one in which the dramatization functioned to confirm and intensify the tenuous organization of the society's order-producing definition of the situation.

---

[36]McHugh, Defining the Situation, p. 117.

[37]Ibid.

CHAPTER TWO

The Origins of the Conflict

In the previous chapter, the social message of the Neidhart plays was described as an unrealistic and over-simplified evasion of the central problems confronting fifteenth century Germany. Even the conflict of the plays, though not the central issue of the age, was shown to be much more than a senseless battle between arbitrary foes. Instead, it was an on-going quarrel which had its roots in the High Middle Ages, some two hundred years before.

The purpose of this chapter is to expose the origins of the conflict presented in the Neidhart plays. First, it will be shown that though owning land was a prerequisite for achieving an esteemed status among the primitive Germans, tilling the land was considered reprehensible. Secondly, the structure of the society in which Neidhart von Reuental, the thirteenth century poet whose life and times became the source of the Legend of Neidhart Fuchs, will be examined. Finally, the wide range of contemporary attitudes toward knight, peasant, and duke will be exposed and then contrasted with the particular view expressed by Neidhart von Reuental.

Primitive Germans observed two principles of land tenure and use which bear directly on the social patterns of the High Middle Ages.

First, holding an allod, that is a piece of land which is held in absolute independence, was deemed necessary if an individual was to be a free adult. Second, to exploit the land by tilling it was considered absolutely reprehensible. These two principles are not as paradoxical as they appear at first. The primitive Germans had a mixed economy, one that combined hunting, gathering, and agriculture. The first specialization of labor which occurred in that culture relegated the task of hunting to the warriors, and farming to the women, old men, and slaves.

Since hunting was the economic activity of a warrior, and farming was the economic activity of women and despised men, it is not surprising that a situation such as that described by Tacitus (98 A.D.) developed.

> When the state has no war to manage, the German mind is sunk in sloth. The chase does not afford sufficient employment. The time is passed in sleep and gluttony. The intrepid warrior, who in the field braved every danger, becomes in time of peace a listless sluggard. The management of his house and lands he leaves to the women, to the old men, and the infirm part of his family. He himself lounges in stupid repose, by a wonderful diversity of nature, exhibiting in the same man the most inert aversion of labor, and the fiercest principle of action.[1]

Tacitus not only exposed the existing division of labor in primitive Germany, but suggested something of the warrior's attitude toward things domestic.[2] Despite the fact farming was considered an odious occupation, owning an allod was the only way in which an individual could become a free adult male. It should be noted, however, ownership of land did not

---

[1]Tacitus Germania xv. 1.

[2]Since, in that period, German men revered their women to a degree which astonished Romans, one can presume the association of slaves with farming was what made it an odious occupation. Ibid. vii. 2.

connote, as it does now, the ability to dispose of that land as one pleased. The primitive German land owner was also, and inseparably, the head of an extended family. Each of his children and nephews had a birthright which was a non-partible share of the allod. The landowner did not covet his position because he loved any intrinsic quality of land, but because as the head of an extended family he was its mund (spokesman) at tribal assemblies.[3] Political power was thus associated with the familial heirarchy and the family was part and parcel of a homestead.

The primitive German male who had not yet come into his inheritance from his father or elder brother was a gwas, cniht or knecht, depending on the linguistic region[4] in which he lived; all meant "initiated boy" and, ultimately, all came to mean vassel or knight. With respect to the young warriors in that society, it can be said they were respected; indeed they could become a graf (count or colonel) or a herzog (duke or general) in the military organization (commitatus). Significantly, however, the warrior was not a part of the system which governed the inner and outer kindreds and it was this fact that fostered his desire to own land.

Some thousand years later, during the period called the High Middle Ages, the feudal social system had, to varying degrees in different

---

[3]Edward Jenks, Law and Politics in the Middle Ages (New York, 1908), p. 78. For a survey of what was known in general about the Germans from the time of Caesar to the time of Tacitus, see E. A. Thompson, The Early Germans (Oxford, 1965). Limited generalizations are drawn from diverse and later sources in Seebohm, Tribal Custom.

[4]Norman F. Cantor, Medieval History (New York, 1963), p. 121.

places, replaced the land/kin social structure. Feudalism is usually considered either "a group of political and legal institutions, as a system of decentralized government--public power in private hands. . .,"[5] or as a complex social organization of a whole culture.[6] Under either definition, one is tempted to see the salient feature of feudalism as being its relatively stable heirarchical structure. While the feudal period of the High Middle Ages was in fact relatively stable, the principle of its organization involved two dramatically opposed considerations. These two opposing elements created wide variations in organizational configurations from country to country, and in the case of Germany, from district to district.

The status of individuals who played roles within the feudal system was simultaneously that of vassal and overlord. The interests or viewpoints typically attending these statuses were diametrically opposed. The overlord attempted to make the land under his jurisdiction produce warriors. He gave to his vassal a precarium, a fief of land, in return for service in warfare. On the other hand, the vassal's interests were best served when he could secure an indisputable title to the land in return for as few services as possible. The dynamic quality of this relationship is apparent to those who are acquainted with the tensions inherent in buying and selling in a marketplace. There was, however, another powerful, but less apparent, stress in this relationship. The thought of giving away land for any reason was alien to the German

---

[5] Ibid., p. 238.

[6] Ibid., p. 240.

mind; it was a Roman custom, whereas the desirability of securing an allod was time-honored.

In addition to the tensions existing between the dual roles of vassal and overlord, there was also a formal incongruency. A large number of the nobility were neither bachelor knights nor kings, consequently, most played the roles of vassal and overlord simultaneously. It was to one's advantage to have as many vassals as possible, but to swear fealty to only a single powerful overlord.[7] Thus, as vassal, the typical feudal lord attempted to divest himself of obligations, while as overlord, he tended to encumber as many subordinates as he could with complex obligations. The feudal system was therefore in a constant state of disequilibrium.

This dynamic quality of generic feudalism produced as many species as there were nations, and in Germany, it produced a wide range of locally defined subspecies.[8] Understanding the social milieu in which Neidhart von Reuental lived requires some knowledge of these varieties of feudal organization.

Three distinct patterns of feudal organization evolved in the Middle Ages. Probably the most successful was that found in Norman England.[9] There, the king required that all nobles, from lowest knight to most powerful duke, swear loyalty to him. This created a nation of vassals committed ultimately to one overlord. In France, prior to the

---

[7]Ibid., p. 246. See also Joseph R. Strayer, "The Development of Feudal Institutions" in Twelfth Century Europe and the Foundations of Modern Society (Madison, Wisc., 1961), pp. 77-88; Sidney Painter, Medieval Society (Ithaca, N. Y., 1951), pp. 11-27.

[8]James Westfall Thompson, Feudal Germany (Chicago, 1928), p. 321.

[9]Cantor, Medieval History, p. 247.

ascendency of the Capetian kings (twelfth century), the dominant figure was the baron.[10] The individual castle proprietor was the hub of a bewildering variety of feudal ties. For example, William Stern Davis structures a typical barony of thirteenth century France in which a particularly successful baron enjoyed the sole allegience of twelve dependent vassals. That baron, in turn, was the vassal of two dukes, one bishop, and a neighboring baron.[11] The third pattern of feudal organization found in Germany requires special attention because of its effect on the life of Neidhart von Reuental. The central figures in German feudalism were the dukes and counts. Their sovereignty became so absolute that one justifiably might say that the extreme social positions in the feudal heirarchy, those of emperor and simple knight, were all but excluded from the political organization of the German state. These territorial princes elected their emperor, rather than an emperor choosing them as princes. Indeed, these princes often chose to deal directly with free peasants rather than go through the existing social chain of command.[12] During the period when this latter organizational pattern existed, the emperor could console himself by considering his demesne and high, if meaningless office, but the poor knight had no office and only a precarious hold on his fief, if he was fortunate enough to have a fief. The knight, like the emperor, had the privilege of being noble, but did not have the substance, political or material, to conduct himself as a noble.

---

[10]Ibid., p. 475.

[11]Life on a Medieval Barony (New York, 1923), pp. 10-11.

[12]J. W. Thompson, Feudal Germany, pp. 293-294; Cantor, Medieval History, pp. 470-472; Barraclough, Origins, p. 143.

At this point, one can see the justification for calling the peasants and knights in the Neidhart plays "half statuses." The lower knighthood possessed no secure land holdings, yet land was the basis of power in the Middle Ages. The German peasant, though often eigen (free) by virtue of his patrimonial allod, was not in a privileged estate. The third status treated in the plays, the duke, possessed both power and privilege. Gehard Lenski provides an excellent abstract model which explains, in part, the triadic relationship of the three statuses. Lenski suggests there are three factors which affect distribution of goods within a society: power, privilege and prestige.

As the model indicates, power accounts for privilege and power plus privilege equals prestige.[13] In the Middle Ages, however, power began as a Janus-like land/kin meld, later it came to be based on a land/warrior union, and finally, land and money were wedded. The prestigious statuses were those in the privileged estate who controlled both elements of the power ratio.

The feudal social system described above was one which permitted a variety of differing attitudes towards the relationship of the statuses. A sanguine openess and tolerance for difference of opinion characterized the High Middle Ages -- a condition which was absent in the late medieval period. The society of the High Middle Ages was one composed of vertically-oriented strata. These strata, called estates, were distinguished, not

---

[13]Power and Privilege (New York, 1966), p. 45.

by traits, but by customary occupations. Thus, it was possible for the priests, artisans, farmers, warriors, and governors to have a full range of positive and negative feelings toward one another. Since this period preceded the Inquisition, individuals tended to express themselves in a relatively free fashion.

Though every estate, from the priesthood to the merchants, received value laden literary attention during the High Middle Ages, this study is solely concerned with the attitudes expressed toward the statuses of knight, peasant, and duke. While at one time or another, each of the latter three statuses received both praise and blame, the subsequent examples of attitudes found in the literature of the High Middle Ages differ greatly from those expressed in the Neidhart plays. Specifically, these examples indicate that there were no commonly and rigidly held opinions about the three subject statuses. Knights could be pictured as evil and crass; peasants could be thought of as being steadfast and loyal, and dukes and other landed aristocrats could be accused of poor judgement.

In the High Middle Ages, knights were not all pictured as loyal, heroic, and brave but gentle individuals. For example, in the song Raoul de Cambrai, Raoul, the hero, orders that his tent be pitched in the church of a defeated city.

> You will place my bed before the alter,
> You will lodge my hawks on the Golden Crucifix.[14]

In keeping with the period's view or portrayal of knights, Raoul

---

[14]León Gaultier, Chivalry, tr. D. C. Dunning (London, 1965), p. 6.

then proceeds to rape the nuns in the collocated convent. Raoul, unlike the legendary Neidhart, loved neither church, women, nor his landed aristocratic superior. Another reference to the wanton cruelty of a parvenue knight can be found in Meir Helmbrecht, a piece written in the middle of the thirteenth century by Wernher der Gartenaere. In it, a robber knight boasts of his treatment of the peasants.

> I seldom bring the peasants joy
> That in our neighborhood are found.
> Their children, where I've been around
> Eat water-soup that's thin and flat.
> I make them suffer more than that!
> I quickly press the one's eyes out,
> On other's backs I lay about.
> Across an ants' nest one I stake,
> Another's beard I jerking take
> With pincers piecemeal from his face.
> . . . . . .
> All that the peasants have is mine![15]

This type of attitude and conduct is in marked contrast to that of the dramatic figure of Neidhart who, in the plays, ostensibly only injures the peasants because they have injured him. In any case, the selections cited above indicate that the people of the Middle Ages could regard a knight as less than a romantic hero.

It should be noted, also, that in the High Middle Ages the peasant was not always considered a boorish filthy beast. He frequently was depicted as a hard working, simple, but good man whose relationship with the lord of a manor was an honorable one. The good knight protected the good peasant and the peasant, in turn, supported the knight. Some of the period's attitude toward these two statuses was reflected by Hartman von Aue who, at the beginning of the thirteenth century, wrote Der arme Heinrich which describes the knight Heinrich as,

---

[15]Clair Hoyden Bell, Peasant Life in Old German Epics (New York, 1931), p. 70.

. . . a certain knight
In Swabia begotten.
In him there was forgotten,
Of manly virtues, none, in truth,
That any noble in his youth,
To win full praise, must have . . .[16]

Later in the piece, a peasant who is Heinrich's ward is pictured as living in pastoral contentment.

This forest clearing isolated
Was at the time still cultivated
By a peasant, freeborn and content,
Who very seldom underwent
Any great discomfort, such
As other peasants suffered much,
Who had worse overlords to bear,
Since these latter did not spare
Them hard exactions or commands
Whate'er was done by this man's hands
For Heinrich, that appealed to him
As quite enough. He shielded him
So that he suffered, and his farm,
From no one, violence or harm.
Hence it was, that far around
No man so prosperous could be found.[17]

There is an immense difference between this picture of a traditional, trouble free knight-peasant relationship and the raw acrimony which the statuses display toward each other in the Neidhart plays. The above poem also challenges the notion that the only bond that could exist between knight and peasant was that of lord and man. In the poem, the peasant's daughter offers up her life in order to cure the knight of a strange malady. Heinrich, the knight, is so smitten by this gesture that he marries the young maiden. In fifteenth century Germany, such a match would have been unthinkable.

---

[16] Ibid., p. 93-94.

[17] Ibid., p. 100.

Since Der Arme Heinrich is doubtless the kindest treatment of the peasant status in the Middle Ages, it should be noted that it does not represent the attitude with which the peasants were generally viewed. A view of peasants which is closer to the modal attitude of the age is that found in Ruodlieb, a story written by an eleventh century monk. In this story the whole peasant estate is viewed as "rough and uncultivated, but full of sturdy thriftiness."[18]

The last of the three statuses to be considered here, the duke, received the same wide range of treatment by medieval poets. While some works, such as the Kaiser-Chronik, created a fictive linage which traced the ancestory of the recently risen Welf family back to the time of the Romans,[19] other works contain attacks on the persons and offices of the middle aristocracy. The bulk of the poets veiled their criticism, a typical example being Reinhart der Fuchs, a work written about 1180. This narrative, which bears some resemblance to the Neidhart Fuchs legend, is an account of a clever fox who is outwitted by small animals, but who finds it easy to fool the wolf and lion who live in castles. Landed aristocrats are also repeatedly defeated in the narrative, Lanzelet, a work translated from the Anglo-Norman about 1200 by Urich von Zatzikhoven. The hero of the latter story is a magically disinherited knight who goes about conquering castle proprietors until he finally discovers and regains his birthright. In other works, such as Spuchdichtung of Walther von der Vogelweide, there are direct assaults on the powerful men in Germany. Walther, incensed by his dismissal from

---

[18]Walshe, Medieval German Literature, p. 54.

[19]Kuno Franke, A History of German Literature, 4th ed. (New York, 1901), p. 52.

the ducal court at Vienna and by papal and princely politics, issued broadsides at a variety of aristocratic targets with little more damage to himself than an occasional insult.[20] In all, dukes and other princes were not immune to criticism of their judgement or their characters. The remote, dignified, and judicious Duke of Austria presented in the Neidhart plays some several hundred years hence would have appeared in quite a different light in the actual social situation of the High Middle Ages.

In the midst of the wide ranging expressions of attitude toward knights, peasants, and dukes which prevailed during the High Middle Ages one finds that put forth in the poetry of Neidhart von Reuental. That poetry not only contained the basis for attitudes expressed in the legend of Neidhart Fuchs, but for attitudes found in the Neidhart plays of the fourteenth and fifteenth century as well. It will be shown below that Neidhart's poetry reflected his personal view of the vicissitudes which beset the landless German knight of the High Middle Ages.

Neidhart von Reuental, the knight to whom both the legendary and dramatic figures can be traced, flourished from 1210 to 1236. He was a poor knight, dependent upon the patronage of the courts of Bavaria and Austria. His precarium was pitifully small and not in any way secure. Walther von der Vogelweide not only knew of him, but knew enough of his poetry to liken it to the croaking of frogs.[21] Neidhart, unlike the

---

[20]Walshe, Medieval German Literature, pp. 117-120. For more examples of the wide range of attitudes toward the various statuses in the High Middle Ages, see Erwin Gudde, Social Conflicts in Medieval German Poetry in University of California Publications in Modern Philology, XVIII (Berkeley, 1934).

[21]Walshe, Medieval German Literature, p. 127.

majority of his fellow knightly balladeers, did not write of unobtainable love and dashing deeds. Rather, he wrote of the very obtainable love of peasant wenches and of the coarse deeds of their fathers and lovers. In terms of his subject matter, Neidhart makes his own best apology.

> And now I am to sing?
> The corn sheaf sings each morning
> To him who tends a manor.
> And Englmair, whom I hate,
> Did Fridrauna's mirror break.
> How ought I behave?[22]

His question concerning an appropriate form of behavior was well taken, indeed, since the forces and conditions in his life were too complex to provide simple, non-equivocal behavioral guidelines. As knight, he was confronted by the fact that while the ideas of chivalry had their source in the early German initiation rites, they had been refined by the French who disdained farming. Whether or not Neidhart actually did manual labor cannot be known for certain, but it is known that the Norman French invaders of England could not tell a Saxon noble from a Saxon peasant at harvest time. It may well be that Neidhart's hands, which from his viewpoint were meant for grasping swords and narrow-waisted women, occasionally graced a pitchfork.

To appreciate Neidhart von Reuental's plight, it is essential to know what imperatives were associated with his status. Ideally, he had certain rights and obligations which governed his relationships with others. For instance, the obligations of knighthood were to honor and

---

[22]Haupt, Neidhart's Lieder, p. 39.

defend the Church, protect the weak, love one's country, to be brave, to prosecute the infidel, to perform one's feudal duties, to be honest, to be generous, and to defend the right.[23] The qualities of a proper knight included zuht (good breeding and manners), which were seen in mâze (measured self-restraint) and êre (honor). The knight was filled with mannes muot (bravery), and was wary though intrigued by the hôher muot (exalted spirits) found in courts. This hôher muot was feared by churchmen who likened it to superbia, the sin of Lucifer. The knight was above all possessed of milte and erbärmde (generosity and mercy).[24]

Neidhart von Reuental was also faced with a typical sociological dilemma; whereas the obligations of a status are clearly spelled out, even codified, the concommitant rights and privileges are not nearly so well defined. It is known, however, that the French provided the model for courtly life during the High Middle Ages, in fact, even the French vocabulary of chivalry was adopted by German knights.[25] Leon Gaultier's study of the "fifteen relaxations" of knighthood reveals that, if a knight, one went to tournaments, hunted, fished, and strolled in the orchard, or if one wished to remain indoors, he sat

> . . . warming himself in winter in the chimney corner of the great fireplace; according open house to wandering minstrals, hearing all their songs and forming an orchestra with them; taking or giving fencing lessons; enjoying the luxury of watching wild animals in combat, contests dear to all primitive peoples--fights between wild boars and bears, fights to the death; playing twenty games of chess interspersed with backgammon and dice; and above all, eating heartily and making short work of his store of wine.[26]

---

[23]Gautier, Chivalry, pp. 9-10.

[24]Walshe, Medieval German Literature, pp. 92-94.

[25]Ibid. [26]Gautier, Chivalry, p. 213.

Though it is not mentioned in the quotation above, it should be remembered that these pleasures were conducted in halls richly lined with tapestries and in the presence of numerous ladies. Ladies were the object and the subject of minne, the higher love. Romantic love, as it is known in the present century, was born in the songs of the pleasantly distraught knights whose love increased in direct proportion to the remoteness and unattainability of their favorite lady.

If the knightly pastimes and way of life described above is in any way an indication of what Neidhart thought was expected of him, and what he could reasonably expect of his society, it is possible to envision what he must have felt when confronted with the actual circumstances of his life. From what is known of Neidhart's life, it would appear that he consciously attempted to meet his obligations, but that he in my way obtained what he reasonably expected was his due. There were no fine ladies in his life, only peasant girls. He did not watch wild boars fight, rather he watched his pigs root in their sty. While, in his mind's eye he lived in a castle surrounded by gardens and orchards, in terms of fact, he lived in a rural Bavarian manse which was built about an open hof wherein a rich rotting pile of manure steamed throughout the year, with smirking peasants increasing its bulk by pot and cart load as part of their feudal due.[27]

Though Neidhart von Reuental attempted to live up to the code of chivalry, accounts of his life would indicate he found it impossible

---

[27]Manure was an extremely valuable commodity in the Middle Ages. Peasants had to pasture their animals on the land of their lord and a periodic pot of the stuff was often required by feudal lords, Marc Bloch, French Rural History (Berkely, 1966), p. 25.

to obey at least two of its injunctions. Although he was bidden to protect those beneath him and to be generous, he lacked the ability to do either. That fact, alone, would account for a large part of the unhappy world view he presented in his poetry. To be specific, the Alpine peasants who lived about him were hardly in need of protection. They were the same peasants who, within one hundred years of the time Neidhart had received his small fief from Leopold, Duke of Austria, revolted and created the republic of Switzerland. Rather than having to succor those beneath him, Neidhart noted that the peasants, who by law were forbidden to wear weapons or bright colored clothing[28] were armed with swords "as long as flails."[29] As for generosity, he had neither the wherewithal nor the potential for largesse. Indeed, the difference between the fortunes of the peasants and Neidhart appears to have been insignificant. This lack of economic and military differentiation between the peasant and knight resulted from the Alpine ecology which produced a bare subsistance. The differential distribution of goods which characterizes societies with an elite, and which would have been essential in order for Neidhart to assume the role of generous benefactor, is dependent on a generous surplus of goods, and is largely impossible in a subsistance economy such as his age possessed.[30] His hopes of serving as a protector were likewise thwarted by the fact that knights were not militarily powerful in mountainous regions because of

---

[28]Hügli, Der deutsche Bauer, 42, 53.

[29]Haupt, Neidhart's Lieder, p. 99.

[30]Lenski, Power and Privilege, pp. 44-45.

the positive disadvantage of being on horseback and in the open when facing hidden, well-protected antagonists.

The peasants, for their part, didn't make it easy for a knight to feel paternal about them. Neidhart von Reuental, who in his own eyes ought to have been surrounded by gentle ladies of the court, had to make do with peasant maids. This no doubt pleased the maids, but it might well have created a tense situation with the understandably irritated men. In fact, the peasant men stole the gifts he had presented to the girls he wooed and made fun of his courtly love. As Neidhart put it,

> Giselbolt and Engelram
> Disparage me, my singing.
> The same two hie themselves to Engelmair
> Who with force, took Fridrauna's mirror.[31]

Neidhart von Reuental imagined that his lack of suitable women pleased the peasants, and in a state of mind approaching paranoia, he became convinced their intentions were evil.

> Amelunge's sorrow
> Is not my own.
> My love-lack gives him joy, him and Uodelrich.
> He plots my downfall with a secret diligence,
> He and Eberbolt, the unmitigated beast.
> Eberbolt and Amelune,
> Uodelger and Undelhart
> Have signed a pact against me.
> Many evil things come of this.
> How they boast of the shame they'll cause me!
> Covertly and openly
> They pledge this boast anew![32]

---

[31]Haupt, Neidhart's Lieder, p. 96.

[32]Ibid., p. 109.

At one point in his writings, Neidhart's anger at the peasants' temerity and open rivalry for the favors of the peasant maids brings forth the following angry promise.

> He, whoever of his company,
> Who takes the hand of her with whom I dance,
> Shall be split an ells width, that is certain.
> No help he'll find
> In doublet or in helm
> To prevent this injury![33]

The dismal condition of Neidhart's own wardrobe made the rich peasants' violation of the existing sumptuary laws even more hateful in his eyes. For instance, Neidhart promises Hildemar, an overdressed peasant, a dire future if anyone from court ever sees him with his hood which has pretty birds embroidered all about it.

> Brash, he would be the equal of men of high degree,
> Who have spent their days at court and there from
> youth have grown.
> His hood, if they catch him, will be stripped off
> speedily;
> Before he knows what's happened to him, his birds
> will all have flown.
> Let this reward he'll receive
> Be his ambitions yield.[34]

All of the poems which picture Neidhart von Reuental's unpleasant relationship with the peasant men are called winter songs because they begin with a naturalistic description of a winter scene. Neidhart's more felicitious relationships with the peasant maids are described in his summer songs. The latter, for example, contain such items as a village maid's discussion of the chances and the probity of an alliance

---

[33]Ibid., p. 83.

[34]Ibid., p. 154.

with the knight of Reuental. Significantly, in that dialogue a friend or mother always cast doubts upon the feasibility or desirability of such an occurance. The maid, of course, will have no other. Peasant lads, if they are mentioned at all in the summer songs, are the losers in the contest for the maids' affections.

The fawning subservience which characterizes the fifteenth century relationship of the legendary Neidhart Fuchs to the mythic Duke has its origins in the poetry of Neidhart von Reuental. Whether or not Neidhart von Reuental felt this way about his overlord is difficult to tell. There is some suggestion that the von Reuental parody of peasant manners may have been a double-edged sword. The higher love of the courts may have been the object of a subtle attack by him.[35] In any case, in his poems, Neidhart von Reuental was manifestly polite and even servile toward the Duke. At one point he thanks him for his gift of land and wonders if the feudal due might be waived.[36] A similar degree of subservience is evidenced when he asks for a house to hold the casket of silver the Duke has given him. Later, Neidhart pledges that, in life, he will serve the Duke by his hand, and in death, should he see God, his tongue will sing a song of praise so that the Duke will be known the breadth of Paradise.[37] Finally, proof of the servility of Neidhart can be found in the fact one poem even professes pleasure over the fact that the Duke saw fit to draft Neidhart's own men, Bereluip, Irenwart, and

---

[35]Walshe, Medieval German Literature, p. 127.

[36]Ibid., p. 128.

[37]Bell, Peasant Life, pp. 180-181.

Uoge, into the army. The poem in question concludes with the following thinly veiled allegory.

> He who has a bird whom he bids sing
> Throughout the year,
> Should the while
> Mend the birdhouse
> And give him food,
> So that this same bird
> Can sing sweetly.[38]

The examples of Neidhart's work cited above provide an outline of his definition of the social situation in medieval Germany. This definition was not unwarranted. His irritation at the peasant men for their rivalry and their presumptious adoption of knightly usages was justified both by law and by custom. His subservience to the Duke is equally understandable since only the Duke could rescue him from his penury and lack of land. It is equally obvious, however, that Neidhart's definition of the social situation was not the only one. His contemporary, Hartmann von Aue, the author of Der arme Heinrich, was a simple knight who lived in circumstances which would have been similar to those experienced by Neidhart. Nevertheless, Hartmann's works contain the kindest literary treatment of the peasants in the Middle Ages.

It has been shown that the origin of the conflict found in the Neidhart plays can be traced to the organization of the feudal structure in Germany during the High Middle Ages. Seeds of the conflict are found in the fact that armed peasants who were for the most part free were, nonetheless, entirely without privilege, for privilege belonged to the nobility. In turn, the lower nobility, the knights, possessed privileges

---

[38] Ibid., p. 151.

without the means to exercise them. Though this was the typical situation in southern Germany, there were radically different definitions of that situation. The poetry of Neidhart von Reuental created one definition which pictured knights as "song birds," dukes as warders of birdhouses, and peasants as presumptuous poltroons. It was this definition which served as the genesis of the legend of Neidhart Fuchs, "enemy of the peasant."

The process of the historic selection of Neidhart's definition of the situation over all others will be the subject of the next chapter.

CHAPTER THREE

The Development of the Neidhart Legend

In the preceding chapters, the social significance and the social and literary origins of the Neidhart plays were discussed. It was found the unrealistic, but functional, definition of the social situation implicit in those fourteenth and fifteenth century plays stemmed from the world view held by Neidhart von Reuental, a poor German knight of the early thirteenth century. The purpose of this, the last portion of the social analysis of the Neidhart plays, is to consider factors affecting the process by which the views and motifs of Neidhart von Reuental's poetry became part of the traditional literature of the Late Middle Ages. The initial portion of this examination traces the development of the legend from the time of its source in the historic figure of Neidhart von Reuental to its fruition in the fifteenth century plays. That accomplished, the factors which favored the adoption of Neidhart's world view over other prevailing views will be considered. Finally, the process by which the Neidhart world view was adopted will be examined.

The development of the Neidhart myth falls into three definable phases; the first is Neidhart von Reuental's personal definition of the situation, a definition which evolved in the first half of the

thirteenth century. The second is found in the corpus of poetry known as the Neidhart apocrypha (Haupt's Unechte Lieder) which stems from the time of the historic character to the advent of the fifteenth century. The third and final phase is encompassed in the plays and the legend of Neidhart Fuchs. Richard M. Meyer points out there is a logic in this progression or development, namely, the first phase is Neidhart, the second like Neidhart, and the third about Neidhart.[1]

If one recalls the tone, motifs, and structure of the plays, and then compares them to the brief exposition of Neidhart's poetry presented in Chapter Two, it becomes apparent that the development of the myth involved an adaptation of the works of Neidhart von Reuental as it did adoption of them. Although earlier discussion has taken significant note of that historic character's dislike of the peasantry, his views on that issue must be contrasted with the even more extreme expressions found in the later works. Therefore, the positive, less extreme aspects of his attitude toward peasants must receive attention.

In order to trace the development of the Neidhart legend, the first facet in the work which must be considered is the shift in the emotional tone of the writings from that found in the poetry of the historic Neidhart to that of the traditional narrative. Neidhart von Reuental was a realistic, perhaps satiric, poet who was exclusively occupied with attempts to attain and protect the rights he felt were his. One senses a sad, world-weary quality in a good number of his poems.

---

[1]"Die Neidhartlegende" in Zeitschrift für deutsches Altertum und deutsche Litteratur, XXXI (1887), 66.

Some modern students of German literature feel he was resigned to the fact that peasants such as those he dealt with were there to stay.[2] In the second phase of the legend's development, the Neidhart apocrypha, Neidhart's attitude and accompanying treatment of the peasants reveals a small but distinct tendency toward bitterness and direct assault. It is in the final phase of development, however, that the greatest change takes place. The fifteenth century plays and legend have little of the sad, world-weary quality discernable in the earlier works. That early quality is replaced by a mood of violence, cruelty, and acrimony which is evident even in the translation of the plays. By the time the legend of Neidhart Fuchs went into print in the last quarter of the fifteenth century it was, if anything, even more profoundly steeped in a spirit of hatred. Thus, a clear progression can be seen from the relatively mild almost passive quality of Neidhart von Reuental's poems to the active, harsh quality of the later narratives.

The treatment of the peasant characters in the various phases of the legend's development parallels the progression in mood noted above. Insofar as the man Neidhart von Reuental is concerned, it would be incorrect to state that he had any great appreciation of peasant men in general. It should be noted, however, his hatred was directed toward specific peasants -- namely, Engelmair and his lieutenants, not toward the peasant class as a whole. Indeed, when he joins the peasants in a sleigh party he calls them "youngsters" (kint) and joins their dance by

---

[2] A. T. Hatto and R. J. Taylor, The Songs of Neidhart von Reuental (Manchester, 1958), p. 5.

a warm stove.[3] This is hardly the language and behavior of a man filled with hatred. In a similar scene in the first of Neidhart's winter songs, he describes a winter which is so cold it has driven all of the young people indoors into the house of Engelmair, the one who, in time, is to be the epitome of peasant villiany. In the poem, the peasants dance and laugh while Neidhart composes a new song so that all might forego heavy hearts. The warm atmosphere and happy people, secure from winter's depredations, make Neidhart declare: "Engelmair, your lodge is good."[4] This brief and grudging praise of Engelmair cannot be construed as an encomium, but it is in marked contrast to the unrelenting and general hatred of peasants found in the later works.

Neidhart's poetic treatment of peasant women offers an even greater basis for establishing a difference in the attitudes and belief sets between the High and Later Middle Ages. The Neidhart whom history records appears to have taken a positive view toward the peasant women around him. He refers to one of his peasant loves as ein jungiu meid[5] (a young maiden) and to the others as maids (mägde). Moreover, the girl Fridrauna, appears allegorically, if not in fact, to have been Neidhart's chief peasant love, and when his poems make reference to her they tend to lose their sardonic quality. As a case in point, one might consider the following reference to her.

> Now the meadow is a lace of flowers
> With wide-eyes roses
> Bright upon the heath

---

[3]Haupt, Neidhart's Lieder, p. 60.

[4]Ibid., p. 55

[5]Ibid., p. 7.

Resplendent pierced.
A garland of these I sent
To . . . Fridrauna.[6]

It would appear, therefore, Neidhart von Reuental did not take a totally negative or bitter view of the peasants. He could see some good in peasant men, even in Engelmair at one time, and in various ways he "loved" the peasant maidens.

In tracing the development of the legend, and in particular attitudinal shifts within it, the Neidhart apocrypha represents a transition from the position found in the poems of the historical Neidhart to that found in the legend of Neidhart Fuchs. It is the apocrypha collection which contains the first explicit statements or examples of bitter hatred toward the peasants. For instance, after depicting a peasant brawl the pseudo-Neidhart says:

Holerswan and Bezeman
Were cut to the quick.
Not that I care much.
They could have all died.
. . . . . .
May God with the same dispatch of my departure ever
Curse these louts![7]

The extent to which this attitude represents a departure from the attitude of the original knight and poet is clearly seen by comparing the ending of an analogous scene written by Neidhart von Reuental. After the latter has depicted the fatal conflict between Holerswan and Bezeman he simply says: "He must on this same place lie dead./ Isn't that a shame?" Whereas Neidhart von Reuental was indirect, and at the most

---

[6] Ibid., p. 38.

[7] Ibid., p. lii.

sarcastic, the pseudo-Neidhart was quite direct and bitter.

In the third phase of the development of the legend from which the plays were derived, the peasant men and women have an entirely different character than their High Middle Age counterparts. Engelmair, who is pictured as boorish and aggressive in Neidhart von Reuental's poems, becomes the evil, sly, and violently discourteous peasant of the Late Middle Ages.[8] Likewise, his wife and daughters do not remain the simple rural women who could tempt a knight to something like a profession of love. Instead, they are imbued with the distinctly inferior attributes of city servants.[9] The Greater Neidhart provides within its stage directions the best evidence of this change of character. Its author begins by calling the peasant women paurdiern (peasant wenches), then he slips into hausdiern (house wench, scullion), and finally he refers to them as simple diern (wenches). In addition, an examination of the Sterzing Scenerio reveals evidence of the beginnings of a naive class consciousness. In it, the prologue asks the audience not to censure the actors who stammer their lines for some can't read (232, 237) and Engelmair solemnly requests that the messenger read Neidhart's challenge because he had never been to school (242, 249). Literacy, which had been the property of the church in Neidhart von Reuental's time, had apparently become a commodity which could be purchased by the affluent middle class of the Late Middle Ages. So, as the legend developed, the

---

[8] A survey of the literature of the late medieval period establishes this to be the general attitude expressed. See HUgli, Deutsches Bauer, p. 4.

[9] Ibid., p. 97.

peasants not only came to be viewed as sly devils or scullion wenches, but as ignorant illiterates.

The third and final facet of the legend's development to be considered involves the origin and development of the concept of the inversely proportionate distribution of fortunes and desirable characteristics between knights and peasants. This idea differs considerably from the simple declaration that peasants are bad and knights are good. It involves a ratio that functions as a formula for both dramatic and social action. It suggests that if, perchance, a peasant should come into good fortune, the fortunes of a knight must or will decline. Parity even by accident is precluded. When the poems of the original Neidhart von Reuental are considered, it is apparent his contribution to this idea is slight and certainly not explicitly stated in his poetry. There were two formal divisions of his works, however, which may have suggested something of this idea to later writers. Neidhart von Reuental chose to record his conquests in the joyful summer songs and his defeats at the hands of the peasant men in the winter songs. While this mild dialectic tendency receives no further amplification in the apocrypha, it was fully set forth by the time of the plays and the writing of Neidhart Fuchs. For example, by then Frederich of Sunnenberg, an aphoristic poet of the second half of the thirteenth century, had written:

> Noble and wellborn man gladly strives for honor; likewise, a peasant is pleased with misdeeds, that is innate. The nobleman occupies himself with good conduct and worthiness, whenever a peasant acts knavishly he is happy and very contented.[10]

---

[10]George Fenwick Jones, Honor in German Literature (Chapel Hill, 1959), p. 106.

The above is an exact formulation of the attitude or concept identified in the structural analysis of the Neidhart plays. Even the ethical systems of the two statuses are inverted. What is virtue in a knight is vice in a peasant, etc. In the final phase of the legend's development, this definition of status relationship was widened to include every class and occupational group. For example, the story of Til Eulenspiegel, which was written at the turn of the fifteenth century tells of how Til, a clever peasant lad, outwits and cheats every one from priest, to baker, to landed aristocracy. At this point in history, it was believed that what was good for peasants was bad, not only for knights, but for every one else.[11] In the Greater Neidhart a precise formulation of this fortune-character ratio is stated by the character Lucifer who says of the peasants:

> They diminish
> The nobles' stature every day.
> The peasants rise
> And the knighthood falls
> As you have just been told.
> (201, 439, 31)

---

[11]The depth of peasant-hatred in the last part of the fifteenth century and early sixteenth century cannot be exaggerated. The peasants' brief rise in wealth was over and they were once again sinking into abject poverty which was to provoke, in part, the Peasants War of 1525. Yet the "humanist" Bebel writes:

> Be silent, peasant, mark what I say: I do not wish to hide the truth. You should be punished annually, as a willow tree is trimmed with a knife every year. When its sap is drained the tree yields much more, while overgrowth would hamper the wood. Peasant, you have become too proud because they leave you too much money.

Translated by Erwin Gudde, Social Conflicts, p. 126.

So this, the third salient feature in the development of the Neidhart legend, like the general tone and specific treatment of the peasant status, changed from a passive, open definition of situation at the time of its adoption to an active, closed, almost mechanical definition of both the cast and action of the social drama.

Now that the adoption and adaption of Neidhart von Reuental's world views have been reviewed, the further task of this chapter is to explain what factors favored the choice of his definition of the high medieval social situation over all others.

Examination of the factors which affected the selection of Neidhart's definition of the situation is warranted if one recalls that Hartmann von Aue, the author of Der arme Heinrich, lived in the same period and among the same people as did Neidhart. Hartmann's radically different view of peasant-knight relationships was as well known and perhaps better liked than Neidhart's (witness Walther von der Vogelweide's criticism),[12] however, his world view was, nowhere, perpetuated in subsequent literary effort. In spite of its popularity, Hartmann's work remained a curiosity in a sea of anti-peasant sentiment, while Neidhart von Reuental's poetry evolved as the putative source and hallmark of peasant hatred. The factors which influenced this selection suggest, in part, why this became the case.

---

[12]He likened Neidhart's poetry to the "croaking of frogs." Walshe, Medieval German Literature, p. 127.

The first and perhaps most important factor involved in the creation of a favorable climate for the view of society implicit in Neidhart von Reuental's poetry was that, in a way, it explained a troubling social phenomenon found in agrarian cultures which possess an hereditary elite estate. Briefly, this phenomenon consists of a perpetually falling nobility. Neidhart's explanation of this peculiar state of affairs was based on the common, but fallacious, mode of reasoning: Post hoc ergo propter hoc. Following that line of reasoning, it was assumed that if the nobility were falling and some of the peasantry rising there must be a connection between the two events. In actual fact, however, that causal relationship did not exist, as the following discussion will show.

Although the social structures which are common to agrarian cultures are often thought of as rigid, architectonic constructs, in reality they have the capacity for a considerable degree of social mobility. This mobility is difficult to detect from the vantage point of our modern Western civilization because the idea of an upper class in a permanent state of decline is largely inconceivable. The agrarian society in which Neidhart lived had a structural feature, however, which made upward mobility a possibility, but downward mobility the rule. Each rank within the privileged estate breeds more individuals than there are status vacancies for them to fill.[13] If a given society employs the

---

[13]Lenski, Power and Privilege, pp. 289-291. The anomalies which can result from this feature of agrarian social organizations border on being incredible. In eighteenth or nineteenth century Russia, some nobles were so poor they ate and slept with their peasants in one large hut. Some serfs bought their freedom and had enough money left over to live as wealthy men for the rest of their lives.

principle of primogeniture, the effect is to increase the rate of decline of the nobility. For example, in Neidhart's day, a baron produced one baron and several bannerets; that is, his eldest son assumed his title, but his younger sons automatically were members of a lower feudal rank. A banneret was usually assured a holding of land he might pass on to his eldest son, but his younger sons were assured of nothing except that their uncle, the baron, would in time make them knights. In Germany, as pointed out previously, no secure holding of land was associated with knighthood. Further, since knighthood was an achieved status at the bottom of the ranking system, it produced no other of its kind. Knights, therefore, generated squires, priests, minstrels, robbers, or waspish-tempered free peasants. This, the last step, was critical because it was here that one dropped out of the aggregate of governing statuses. In contrast to this rule of downward mobility, upward mobility from the estate of peasant to noble was less certainly achieved. The uncertainty of this rise is not nearly as important to comprehension of the source of misunderstanding between peasant and knight as is the means by which the extremely fortunate peasant rose. In feudal Germany, a peasant or member of the lower class could rise by becoming a bureaucrat. One could manage a remote holding of land for a baron and, in time, be rewarded by knighthood. In no case, however, did a peasant directly replace a knight of declining fortune. Knights and peasants were not customarily rivals for these bureaucratic positions. Not only did the established aristocracy prefer employing the less prestigious and

therefore more malleable members of the despised peasant estate, but the fallen aristocrats were reluctant to go into the service of another. While it is obvious that this structural and organizational configuration made the oldest brother of any aristocrat his natural rival, the rivalry between knight and peasant was stressed, moreso perhaps, because it encompassed the nexus of vertical motion in this society.

One reason for the acceptance of Neidhart von Reuental's view over that of his contemporaries is apparent at this point. While the early part of the thirteenth century was receptive to any explanation of the state of social affairs, Hartmann von Aues view, for example, offered society as a whole only an intensification of the paradox. Indeed, a view such as his would have required the knights to love those whom they imagined were displacing them. It is not surprising, therefore, that the populus came close to embrace Neidhart's common sense definition of the situation.

The second factor which caused a favorable response to Neidhart von Reuental's views grew out of historic considerations.

Two historic tendencies increased the structural tensions within Neidhart's society and created a receptive atmosphere for his definition of the situation. The first of these was the fact that after the Black Plague the peasants became materially well-to-do because of a scarcity of labor. The second was the fact knighthood was dropped as a significant part of the socio-economic organization of the Later Middle Ages. It suffices to say of the peasants that, when they began to drink better wine and wear better clothes than their less well-to-do superiors,[14]

---

[14]J. W. Thompson, Economic and Social History, p. 484.

they were less loved than ever. In a sense, the plight of the knights was like a Cervantian tragicomedy. Knights created associations which alternately united with the dukes against the cities,[15] or with the cities against the dukes,[16] or even with peasants, as was the case in three occasions mentioned in Chapter One. Whoever was allied with the knights had to feed them, and any peasant with a pike, long bow, or cannon could defeat them. Since there was literally no place for them in the evolving society, the knights' behavior reflected little regularity and less purpose. The coincidence of these two historic tendencies confirmed the common belief that the peasants were pushing the knighthood out of their (the knights') place in the social structure.

The combination of the social and historical factors which caused the selection of Neidhart von Reuental's views over those of his contemporaries by the populus of medieval Germany constitutes but one part of the explanation of why the legend of Neidhart Fuchs came to be. After all, the views of an historic personage may be adopted by a later period without any identification of the man with those views. To understand why the fifteenth century legend specifically linked Neidhart von Reuental's name with his definition of the situation, it is necessary to review those aspects of his personal history which made him a likely candidate for becoming a cultural hero. It will be shown, first, that certain events in his life correspond to those of a Western archetypical hero.

---

[15]Barraclough, Origins of Modern Germany, p. 336.

[16]Ibid., p. 330.

Then, secondly, the marginality of Neidhart von Reuental's social position will be shown to have facilitated his transformation into a particular type of traditional hero known as the "trickster" -- a hero who haunts the boundaries of acceptable human behavior.

Neidhart von Reuental's personal history is shrouded in mystery. Nothing is known of him until he went to war in 1217, and nothing is heard of him after he was received at the court of the Duke of Austria in 1230. As has been stated above, the middle portion of his life was filled with adversity which he overcame when he became the ward of the Duke. This history meets several of the canonical features of the archetypical hero derived by Lord Raglan.[17] Raglan divides the "hero's" history into twenty-two typical events. If these twenty-two events are considered on a three-part divisional basis, it becomes apparent that what one does not know about the first and last part of the life of a hero is very important. As Raglan conceives of the hero, his origins and ultimate "destination" are cloaked in mystery. In a sense, a hero must be an open-ended construct. That is, the circumstances surrounding his entrance and exit from the mythic arena must be loose enough to permit the unusual behavior expected of him. While Neidhart von Reuental killed no dragon, his eventual victory over the major obstacle in his life (landlessness), plus the mystery surrounding his birth and death, made him a likely

---

[17]Raglan, The Hero, pp. 178-179. Raglan's construct works well enough for Western heros. Its validity decreases as one moves toward the Far East. See Victor R. Cook, "Lord Raglan's Hero: A Cross-Cultural Critique" in The Florida Anthropologist, Vol. XVIII, No. 3, Part 1, pp. 147-153.

candidate for legendary apotheosis.

In a consideration of factors which may have facilitated the transformation of Neidhart von Reuental into a traditional hero of legend and drama, it should also be noted that the marginality of Neidhart's social position provided certain distinct parallels to the traditional mythic character known as the trickster. As has been noted before, the defining social relationships which constituted the status knight were never very rich in medieval Germany. The knight was excluded from a meaningful role in the political and economic systems of his culture. At the time Neidhart von Reuental lived, the last significant bond of the knight to his society (military capability) was being weakened by bow and pike. In the light of these factors his status does, indeed, appear marginal. In a way, this unhinged quality of Neidhart's social position permitted him a kind of freedom which he would not have possessed had he played the role of a landed aristocrat. For example, one of Neidhart's knightly contemporaries, Ulrich von Liechtenstein, is said to have drunk the water in which his lady had washed her hands; then he chopped off his little finger and sent it to her; finally, he dressed as Venus and made a trip through southern Germany, challenging those who dared to snicker.[18] Such wide-ranging, anomolous behavior, which a knight's marginal status made possible, is precisely the stuff from which trickster heroes and gods are made. For example, mythologist Victor W.

---

[18]Walshe, Medieval German Literature, p. 130.

Turner has described a trickster as:

> A homeless wandering spirit. . . he is present whenever there is trouble and also whenever there is change and transition . . . in most Trickster tales there are many scatological and even coprophagous episodes exemplifying the katabolic nature of the Trickster . . . Other traits ascribed to Tricksters include combined black and white symbolism, aggression, vindictiveness, vanity, [and] defiance of authority . . ..[19]

The trickster is called a "liminal" character because he is an edge man,[20] a creature who acts out the range of possible behavior in a period of transition. The Greek, Hermes, the Norse god, Loki, and the Winnebago, Wakdjunkaga are examples of this type of mythical hero. This liminal characteristic of the trickster has its social analogue in the character who has a marginal status within his society.

The mythic offspring of Neidhart von Reuental, Neidhart Fuchs, corresponds in many ways to the liminal character of the trickster. He is certainly a homeless, wandering spirit who is found where trouble is. Also the scatology, vanity, vindictiveness, and aggression attributed to the trickster are evident enough in the real life character of Neidhart von Reuental. Indications of Neidhart's defiance of authority is veiled in the plays, as it understandably would have to be in an event presented publicly in the fourteenth century, but it is clear in the legend that his relationships with the high-born ladies of his superiors were not as platonic as decorum would dictate. Moreover, in both the play and the legend, Neidhart's antinomous nature is indicated by his love of disguise.

---

[19]Victor Turner, "Myth and Symbol" in The International Encyclopedia of the Social Sciences, ed. David L. Sills (New York, 1968), 581-582.

[20]Ibid.

Then took the black and white symbolism so typical of the trickster tales is evident in the names of the play's central characters. Since Neidhart is without a doubt the protagonist of the dramatic works, it is interesting to note that his name, in root translation, connotes something far less noble or savory. Neid means wickedness and envy, while the combination Neidhart means "hard in battle."[21] Neidhart was also the name of a famous devil found in a tenth century tale.[22] The same symbolic phenomenon can be observed with respect to the peasant Engelmair who, in the plays, displays distinctively villianous characteristics; the Engl in Engelmair is a cognate of our word "angel." In fact, on one occasion it is used as a name for a specific angel (Englmar).[23] Thus, the narratives fostered by Neidhart and his life tend to duplicate or perpetuate a type of antithetic symbolism favored in the trickster tales.

It is obvious that Neidhart Fuchs qualifies in many ways as a trickster tale, and it is equally obvious that the anomolous behavior associated with Neidhart von Reuental's marginal status acted as an additional aid in the process of transforming him into a tradition hero.

Since the development of the legend and factors which favored its development have been exposed, it is now possible to examine the relationship between the changing Neidhart myth and the changing society. This does not involve a recapitulation of the development of the legend, or

---

[21]Samuel Singer, Neidhart Studien (Tübingen, 1920), p. 11.

[22]Ibid.

[23]Ibid.

of the factors which caused the general adoption of Neidhart views. Rather, it involves the calculus of mythic and social processes which occurred in this historic instance.

As used here, the phrase "a calculus of social and mythic processes" refers to a description of the consequential relationships between certain evolving secondary social systems and a simultaneously evolving myth. Before proceeding to such an identification or description, it should be understood that cause and effect relationships cannot be claimed or established if the terms are used in their strictest sense. Shifts in the social system and in the myth do not directly affect one another. Rather, they are met in the psychological processes of human beings. It must be understood, also, there is no invariable response to a given stimulus from either term in the relationship. Thus, no universal or "lawful" statement concerning the process can evolve. What is left after observation of these rather stringent qualifications is the possibility of describing the influence, or as Arnold Hauser says, "conditioning" of one element upon the other.

The description of the specific processes of interaction between myth and secondary social systems requires a general discussion of the functional relationship between systemic levels in any society and some specific treatment of the structure of belief in human individuals. The story of these factors subsumes three of the four steps through which influence from either the social system or the myth will be traced.

Societies can be divided into three functional levels. The first level includes the institutions which provide for the basic needs of man (e.g., the family); the second level is composed of systems which provide instrumental support for the first level institutions (e.g., the educational system); the third level provides for the integrative and symbolic needs of the society as a whole (e.g., religion or myth).[24] In addition to this clear vertical line of need and need fulfillment, there is also a descendent functional relationship between the three levels. For instance, knowledge at the third function level not only fills the content need of the system of education at the second function level, but also to some degree, it shapes the form of that system. Furthermore, the educational system not only fulfills the needs of primary institutions for skilled prlducers, but it also influences the tastes and needs of the consumer. The functional relationship of the three levels is thus a reflexive one.[25]

It is customary and proper in most sociological investigations to treat man's needs as being apart from man himself since those needs pertain to psychology. Such a restriction in scope is not possible, however, if one wishes to discuss specific processes taking place between functional levels inasmuch as the medium of the interaction is within the individual psyche. Since the relationship between the medieval German social system

---

[24]Bronislav Malinowski, "The Group and Individual in Functional Analysis" in American Journal of Sociology (May, 1939): 938-964.

[25]R. H. Tawny successfully attacked both those who held that Calvinism gave rise to capitalism and those who claimed to the contrary that capitalism gave rise to Calvinism. He concluded that both were mutually influential, see Religion and the Rise of Capitalism (New York, 1952), pp. xvi-xix.

and the art and myth of Neidhart von Reuental crosses the second and third functional levels within society, the specific medium of their interaction must be examined. This medium was the belief system of the medieval German populus.

As groundwork for this phase of the consideration of the interaction of the Neidhart myth and prevailing secondary social systems, it will be helpful to note that Milton Rokeach, an eminent experimental psychologist, has established the existence of five distinguishable types of belief which lie on a central to peripheral axis. Respectively, these levels represent primitive beliefs which are held by all the members of the society (type A); primitive beliefs which are equally incontrovertible, but which are held only by a given person (type B); authority beliefs which are essentially ethical judgements about significant individuals and groups (type C); derived beliefs which eminate from authority (type D); and finally, inconsequential beliefs which are incontrovertible because they spring from direct experience, beliefs deemed inconsequential because they are not connected with other beliefs and have no significance outside of themselves (type E).[26] Matters of taste, or opinions on less than important matters, are expressions of the latter kind of belief. Of the five levels of belief enumerated above, the first was found to be held the most tenaciously by experimental subjects. The remaining four, being less central, were less tenaciously held to by the subjects. It is through these outer or peripheral four

---

[26]Belief, Attitude, and Value (San Francisco, 1968), pp. 6-11.

levels of belief that the interaction process between the Neidhart myth and the medieval German social system takes place.

The discussion of the process of interaction between the Neidhart poetry and the Neidhart myth which follows will be divided into four stages. The first stage will begin at the time of the historical Neidhart and the last stage will represent the time immediately prior to the invention of the legend of Neidhart Fuchs and the Neidhart plays. Each of the four stages will be divided into four synchronic steps. In this process, the item to be treated first -- social system or poem/myth -- will be determined by the direction of the line of influence. In turn, either a transaction or a belief will be discussed, the order, again, being determined by the direction of the line of influence. It should be noted at this point that the word transaction means simply some human activity which brings the extreme terms of the formula into contact. After the synchronic relationships in a given stage have been discussed, the succeeding stage will be treated.

State one begins with the social situation in Germany during the High Middle Ages. In addition to the previously noted features of this society (see Chapter Two), there is the fact that Neidhart lived in an age in which the economy not only involved market exchange, but stressed reciprocal exchange and the redistribution of goods and services. The markets, which served as a kind of communication system as well as a medium for commerce, were mostly rural because big city markets were not yet free of feudal domination. This locally centered economic and political feature of the high medieval society, which isolated or

insulated local groups, permitted pluralistic definitions of the situation. This factor combined with the social vicissitudes discussed in the previous chapter to influence Neidhart von Reuental's view of himself and his neighbors. His belief in this regard was of the primitive incontrovertible personal variety (type B). This firmly held, though unique, view fostered his creative endeavor (transaction step) and his poetry because it satisfied an existing symbolic need, which represents the third functional level of society.

Stage two of this myth-poetic interaction begins with the poetry of Neidhart and shows the counterinfluence which the poetry had on the society from which it sprang. Since the poem, once created, stands free and is independent of its author and the society influencing him, its use or value is dictated, not by the factors affecting its genesis, but by its subsequent interaction with an inevitably changed and changing society. The second step in this phase of the poem-myth relationship is marked by the poetry's influence on the belief systems of the aggregate of its audience. Insofar as individual members of that audience liked or disliked Neidhart von Reuental's poetry, their belief (attitude) concerning it was of the most peripheral sort (incontrovertible, but insignificant). Those beliefs were a matter of taste and, as such, they had no external consequence. For example, there is little doubt that many of the people who were familiar with Neidhart's poems had also heard Hartman von Aues' story of the good peasant and the kind knight. Moreover, it is probable they responded to Hartmann's tale with equal

enjoyment and without a trace of anxiety about the manifest inconsistency of the two poems social implications.

The diversity of peripheral belief mentioned above came at a time when social systems in medieval Germany had begun a new stage of development. During the Interregnum (1250-1273), the major cities of Germany became independent political entities. In addition, a big city market economy with widely expanded trade and transportation routes supplanted German economic particularism; the traditional rural market no longer served as the economic center of the nation and the principles of reciprocity and redistribution were done away with in rapid fashion. In a short time, Germany became the most urban of any European nation.[27] This development interacted with the existing Neidhart poetry in an important way. It created conditions which tended to narrow the range of definitions of the situation, and it enhanced the possibility of consensual appreciation of Neidhart von Reuental's views.

The increase in trade and transportation which followed the urbanization of Germany was, in effect, a communication system. It brought more people from different areas together in brief, but intense, periods of social interaction. This type of improved interpersonal communication tends to encourage conformity in a twofold manner. People avoid what is called "cognitive dissonance," and they attach extreme value to belief congruence.[28] For example, if several medieval German

---

[27]J. W. Thompson, Economic and Social History, p. 126.

[28]Rokeach, Belief, pp. 20-21, 88.

merchants held disparate views on peasantry, they would have tended to resolve their differences in direct proportion to the frequency and the intensity of their social interaction in the market place.

Once developments in trade and transportation had established the interaction potential outlined above, the altered social situation exerted an influence on the belief systems of the general population which aided in the eventual popularization of Neidhart von Reuental's works. When it became necessary to work and trade with a multitude of people, and when individuals found that their personal views were shared by others, the population's beliefs about Neidhart's poetry ceased to be merely a matter of individual taste. With respect to the advent of this more uniform pattern of belief, it should be remembered that consensus is more than an aggregate of similar views; it is also a group awareness of similarity of belief. An inconsequential belief which one holds as a matter of taste takes on the weight of a derived or authoritative belief if one discovers it is shared by significant others.[29] The next phase of the popularization of Neidhart's work stems from this consensus. Evidence in support of this proposition is found in the fact that since there is no large corpus of apocryphal works dealing with the life, world view or efforts of Hartman von Aue, who was more highly thought of as a poet than Neidhart von Reuental, it would appear Neidhart had the "better explanation" of the social situation during this period of social and economic integration.

---

[29] Ibid., p. 10.

The next step in this process of mythic and social interaction began with the writing of the Neidhart apocrypha by the pseudo Neidharts and lead through the transaction called assimilation[30] which, in turn, influenced the belief structure of the general population. Belief in peasant wickedness became not only a derived belief based on consensus, but in addition, it became a valuation of negative authority; that is, a negative belief about a significant (reference) group. The social utility of negative reference individuals and groups has been clearly pointed out in several studies.[31] An individual knows what he is, in part, by virtue of what he is not. It would be an exaggeration to classify peasants as deviants in the strict sense of the word, but it would be proper to call them "pariahs" in the sense of Paul Bohannon's use of the term.[32] Like deviants, pariahs tend to mark the boundaries of accepted social existence. When this final alteration in attitudes of the populace of medieval Germany occurred, it interacted with a new shift in the social system.

The disintegration of the estate system of stratification in medieval Germany began at the same moment that the thrust of urbanization was in full force (1250-1276). As noted previously, that estate system was a series of vertically oriented, legally defined social divisions. Each division was a social entity in itself with a distinct or given

---

[30]The identification of a characterized subject with the characterization, e.g., a peasant who acts "uppity" is regarded more as "uppity" than peasant. Ibid., p. 91.

[31]Kai T. Erikson, The Wayward Puritans (New York, 1966); Robert A. Dentler and Kai T. Erikson, "The Functions of Deviance in Groups" in Social Problems, VII (1959), 98-107; George Herbert Mead, "The Psychology of Punitive Justice" in American Journal of Sociology, VIII (1918), 571-602.

[32]Social Anthropology, pp. 183-184, 205-206.

purview. With respect to the disintegration of the estate system, it should be pointed out that during the Interregnum, the Sachsenspiegel (law of the Saxons) was translated into the vernacular. Its contents bore the seeds of many revolutions, but its immediate effect was to replace, in part, the particularism of the German legal system[33] and thus undermine the estate system of stratification. Whereas the medieval estate system was based on equality in the eyes of God and inequality by law, the Sachsenspiegel suggested that men were naturally endowed with certain rights and, thus, were fundamentally equal before the law as well as God.[34] When the Sachsenspiegel and the other comprehensive law systems which followed it brought about the dissolution of intra-estate law, the way was opened for social stratification by class, a stratification which was in effect a horizontal division by social traits.

For the purposes of this study, the process of interaction between the social systems of medieval Germany and the Neidhart myth may be considered to have culminated at this point. Neidhart Fuchs, the enemy of the peasant, and Neidhart plays of fourteenth and fifteenth century Germany can be legitimately viewed as the product of an evolving class system interacting with an assimilated myth based upon wicked peasants who fictively displaced their betters. When the assignment of traits to classes began, the nobility was deemed honorable, and in time the middle class was thought of as sturdy and thrifty, but the peasants for reasons

---

[33] J. W. Thompson, Economic and Social History, p. 487.

[34] Rudolf Huebner, "Man, Right, and Association" in Anthropology and Early Law, ed. Lawrence Krader (New York, 1966), p. 237.

promulgated centuries earlier were thought of as sly devils and loose scullion wenches.

In this, the last portion of the social analysis of the Neidhart plays, the development of the Neidhart myth has been traced from Neidhart's poetry to the legend of Neidhart Fuchs. It has been shown that Neidhart's view of his situation was chosen from the many others because of the existence of conditions of receptivity in the society, and because his character was easily transformed into that of a liminal cultural hero. The process of the development of the myth and of the change in the social systems was one in which both were affected by the reflexive quality of their relationship.

Of the mythic antagonists, there now remains but one, the peasant. The knights rode out of the socio-political structure of Europe leaving behind nothing but the idea of being gentlemen. Engelmair's descendents, who did not become gentlemen, still tilled the fields having given up hope of dancing at court when the middle class moved in.

PART TWO

THE NEIDHART PLAYS AS WORKS OF THEATRICAL ART

CHAPTER FOUR

The Theatrical Origins of the Neidhart Plays

The primary concern of the portion of the theatrical analysis of the Neidhart plays is to expose their antecedent theatrical forms. Although there have been attempts at synthesis,[1] scholarship relative to the medieval theatre and its forms falls, roughly, into two categories--that which maintains its origins are secular, and that which places its beginnings within the liturgy of the Christian church. Although the study of the Neidhart plays does not depend entirely on the theories of the secular school, or claim refutation of those arguments concerning Christian origin, the implications of the study affect both lines of thought. Accordingly, both are treated below.

Those who hold that the origin of the theatre in the Middle Ages is non-Christian posit as its source either the professional mime[2] or pagan religious ritual.[3] The ritualistic practices which are said to survive in the secular drama of the Late Middle Ages, or in the much later folk plays, are of the sort recorded by Sir James Frazer in The Golden Bough.

---

[1]R. Pascal, "On the Origins of the Liturgical Drama of the Middle Ages," in Modern Language Review, XXXVI (1941), 369-387.

[2]Hermann Reich, Der Mimus (Berlin, 1903).

[3]Robert Stumpfl, Kultspiele der Germanen als Urspung des mittelalterlichen Dramas (Berlin, 1936); Benjamin Hunningher, The Origin of the Theatre (New York, 1961).

They include the acts of dancing, leaping, mock marriage and mimed death which the secularists consider homeopathic magic practices.[4] Adherents of this position view the Latin drama of the church primarily as a reaction to the popularity of the professional and/or pagan drama.

Scholars representative of the alternate view believe, variously, that drama sprang from the Christian mass[5] or that it sprang from the office.[6] In either case, the latter group see the ritual of Christian worship as the seed from which the elaborate religious drama of the Middle Ages grew. The secular theatre of the Later Middle Ages, if it is treated at all by members of this school, is seen as the ultimate product of a secular trend in the religious drama.

Generally, both sides of the dispute have a common ground in that they believe that religion generates drama at some stage in its development. The central question which separates them is not so much how drama developed in the Middle Ages as it is from which religion did drama develop? The dispute has, in forensic terms, developed little "direct clash" except in the case of Benjamin Hunningher's work. His efforts are

---

[4]James George Frazer, The New Golden Bough, ed. Theodor H. Gaster (New York, 1961), pp. 50-57, 73, 80-81.

[5]O. B. Hardison, Christian Rite and Christian Drama in the Middle Ages (Baltimore, 1965).

[6]Chief among others, Leon Gautier, Histoire de la Poesie Liturgique: les Tropes (Paris, 1886); Wilhelm Creizenach, Geschichte des neueren Drama (Halle, A. S., 1893); E. K. Chambers, Medieval Stage (Oxford, 1903); Karl Young, The Drama in the Medieval Church (Oxford, 1933); Hardin Craig, The English Religious Drama of the Middle Ages (London, 1960).

dismissed for less than substantial reasons at times.[7] For instance, Hunningher's carefully reasoned argument and cautious conclusions were treated with a one line rejection by O. B. Hardison, " . . . and this challenge, because it begins by ignoring the obvious, has come to nothing . . ."[8] Perhaps because he considers the obvious so obvious, Mr. Hardison does not choose to elaborate. One can presume, however, Hardison's position is that the corpus of plays which form the basis for his conclusions number in the hundreds, whereas Hunningher has but three plays from the High Middle Ages with which to establish his theory of secular origin. This is hardly a valid attack since secular drama, if it existed at all, would have been part of the oral tradition (not literary) by reason of the lack of time, money, literacy, and inclination of its practitioners. Ultimately, the quarrel between the groups may be a

---

[7]The bulk of German scholarship on the subject is dismissed as being Nazi-oriented; see Richard Bernheimer, Wild Men in the Middle Ages (Cambridge, Mass., 1952), p. 199; Walshe, Medieval German Literature, p. 405. Prior to the Second World War, however, Neil C. Brooks of the University of Illinois reviewed Stumpfl's Kultspiele der Germanen in a critical, but positive, fashion. See Journal of English and Germanic Philology, XXXVII 91938), pp. 300-305. Also see F. E. Sandbach, Modern Language Review, XXXII, (1937), pp. 317-322. Hardison, in Christian Rite, assaults the secular school for its lack of historical data, adopts the axioms of its position (pp. x-xi), attacks his predecessors Chambers and Young for a super-abundance of data (pp. 8, 26) and the evolutionary basis of their histories (p. 33), and in several cases falls into instances of his own doctrine. He cites Honorius of Autun (c. 1100) to the effect that the mass is tragical and the priest a tragedian (pp.39-41) and neglects to say that Honorius also wrote that no actor (joculatores) had any chance of redemption for "in their whole aim they are Satan's ministers." In the former instance, Honorius is speaking metaphorically, in the latter instance, he was rendering explicit judgement against an ancient ever-present threat to the church, the professional actor. See Allardyce Nicoll, Masks, Mimes, and Miracles (New York, 1931), p. 168.

[8]Hardison, Christian Rite, p. vii.

semantic one. Certainly if one used the term drama to mean a particular literary form, the antiquity and primacy of the Christian drama cannot be contested. This, however, does not preclude the possibility of the production of plays on secular themes which, from a theatrical viewpoint, may have been more artistic than the turgid mysteries. As Hunningher points out, Adam de la Halles' Jeux de la Feuillee (1262) is better written from a modern viewpoint than any extant religious drama from any century.[9]

The relationship of the study of the Neidhart plays to the two schools of thought on medieval theatre is one which is not easily identified with either position. Discussion of the pagan religious rituals in connection with the Neidhart plays will be waived for the moment because there is no direct evidence that either the fourteenth and fifteenth century plays, or their antecedent theatrical forms, had anything to do with a religious ceremony per se. The subsequent discussion of the plays and pagan practices will be based on the idea that a distinction exists between pagan usage and pagan religious usage. The relationship of the theatrical antecedents of the Neidhart plays to the theory of the Christian origin of the drama is that of being another historic instance which is inexplicable in terms of that theory.

Since the relationship of this study to the two major schools of thought on medieval theatre has been examined, discussion of the main topic can proceed.

---

[9]Hunningher, The Origin of the Theatre, pp. 82-83.

The theatrical origins of the Neidhart plays fall into three categories. The first two of these categories are similar in that both are called tanzspiele[10] (dance-plays) by Hintner and Gusinde, the authors of the major works on the subject plays. These "dance-plays" are subdivided into two subordinate divisions, bauertanzspiele (peasant-dance-plays) and rittertanzspiele (Knight-dance-plays). The third source of theatrical influence on the Neidhart plays is the Christian drama of the Middle Ages. These influences on the fourteenth and fifteenth century Neidhart plays will be discussed in the order given above.

The bauertanzspiel, which bears directly upon the development of the later Neidhart plays, is recorded in three Middle High German manuscripts. They are the Weingarten M. S. (early fourteenth century); the large Heidelberg M. S. (early fourteenth century); and the Preussische Staatsbibliothek M. S. Germ. fol. 779 (fifteenth century).[11] The date of their origin might be anywhere from 1215, when Neidhart is first known, to some one hundred years later.[12] Along with other works, each of the above manuscripts contains poetry of Neidhart von Reuental and the Neidhart apocrypha. The bauertanzspiel described in the Neidhart apocrypha opens with a description of winter's recent demise. To mark its passing, Fridebolt, a peasant, and his companions are preparing for a dance with swords both long and wide. At that point, the narrator begins to directly address the company:

---

[10]"Beiträge zur Kritik," VI, 42-59; Neidhart mit dem Veilchen, pp. 218-222; Karl Weiss, Geschichte der Stadt Wien, I (Wien, 1882), 538.

[11]Olive Sayce, The Poets of the Minnesang (Oxford, 1967), p. xxiv.

[12]Singer, Neidhart Studien, pp. 7-8, believes the poem may be older than Neidhart. Neidhart's view from the cask might have been a later accretion.

Otte, should the Easter play come this way
Let me know your mind!
Künze, you have many friends,
Tell me how it goes with love.
Fridebolt lead the dance from here
. . . . . .
Bind your sword on the left.
Be happy for Künze's sake!
Lead us before the high court gates.
Let the dance ride out upon the meadow.[13]

Since the first line of address in the poem contains the word Osterspiel (Easter play), and since Grimm notes no meaning for the term which does not denote some kind of theatrical performance at spring,[14] it might be said that the study of the Neidhart plays relates in a negative way to the theories of Christian origin of drama in the Middle Ages. Certainly the subsequent lines in the passage above make it abundantly clear that this "Easter play" was not in the Christian tradition. It apparently employed swords, may-brides, and mutilation, and had nothing to do with the passion of Christ.

The poem's narration continues by praising May time and the love it brings to all. The apocryphal poet begins to tell of how the countryside is filled with gaudily dressed peasants all converging on Zeislmaur, a village. In his words, " . . . and so they gather here,/ Many more than a hundred./ They herd themselves upon the green/ To form a new group."[15] Next, they are named in an endless and hilarious fashion. " . . . Lumpolt, Rumpolt, Kumpolt/ . . . Ezzel, Wezzel, Brezzel, and the younger Lanze."[16]

---

[13]Haupt, Neidhart's Lieder, p. xxxviii.

[14]Jacob and Wilhelm Grimm, Deutsches Würterbuch (Leipzig, 1854), p. 1380.

[15]Haupt, Neidhart's Lieder, p. xlvii.

[16]Ibid., pp. xlvii-xlix.

At that point, the poet declares, "Now I have of these empty louts/ Named full fifty-two,"[17] and he goes on to complain that there are yet three whom he has not mentioned who hailed him before the court. Of the latter, he says, " . . . They think themselves so free that I must be stepped upon."[18] At that point, activity on the green suddenly begins.

> Gîselbreht pounds upon a dog hide.[19]
> Limmenzun and Friderun press against the crowd.
> Now a play begins, which was too much before such
> a rich bride.[20]
> I lay squeezed in a barrel
> Near by the wine
> Until there began a conflict
> Which resulted in great injury.

In the passage pertaining to that activity, several incidents occur which are of interest. The text states: "Here begins a spiel (or play)." Unfortunately, this in itself does not guarantee that the event or action in question is necessarily a schauspiel or theatre piece. Spiel has the same wide range of meaning in German as "play" does in English. Thus, the term might have been used simply as a reference to some non-serious and non-dramatic act. It could be that the play was a simple round or garland dance which ended in a conflict. There are, however, three bits of evidence which tend to legislate against these non-theatrical possibilities. The first is the previously noted fact that the word Ôsterspiel was usually reserved for theatrical performances, especially of the Christian variety. The second piece of evidence is found in the statement

---

[17] Ibid.

[18] Ibid., p. 1.

[19] Gîselbreht rüer in des hundes huit. Probably a drum made of a dog skin. Ibid.

[20] . . . vor einer richen bruite. Sarcastically spoken, perhaps referring to the may-bride celebration.

"Giselbreht pounds upon a dog hide." This may have meant a drum, and if that were so, it would parallel the medieval custom of playing pipes and other musical instruments prior to a theatrical performance: see the Sterzing Scenario (232, 237). The final fact which lends credence to the belief that the action or activity in question was a theatrical item (play) stems from the phrase "Limmenzun and Friderun press against the crowd." In the medieval outdoor theatre, it was custom for the Wegmacher to make way through the crowds for the performers. In view of that, Limmenzun and Friderun may well have been the ones designated to perform that function before the start of the poem's theatrical event: see the Sterzing Scenario (231, 236). Though the evidence offered above does not completely over-rule the possibility that the spiel to which the poem refers was non-theatrical, it makes it a distinct probability.

Immediately following the passage cited above comes one in which the cause of the conflict of the bauertanzspiel becomes apparent.

> Lord Engelmair was deceived,
> He and his companions.
> He broke the mirror
> Which crowned Fridrauna's flowers of May.[21]

The above four lines represent the apocrypha's version of the incident which caused the historical Neidhart von Reuental such anguish. Significantly, however, there is a difference in the rendering of it in this later version. In this reference, both Lord Engelmair and his companions are deceived. The reason for that deception becomes evident in the

---

[21] Oberthalben ires mein er Friderun den speigel brach. The meaning of the phrase is obscure. Haupt holds that mein = meinol = mons veneris. Ibid., p. li, Singer, Neidhart Studien, p. 6, suggests mein = meien = bouquet.

subsequent action.

> Then began a rumble and a brawl,
> Then I saw two new swords, each with a fine hilt,
> Which caused Lord Engelmair to be set on a stilt.
> I was reassured.
> When someone [a companion] joined me
> For should they have known my whereabouts,
> I should have no longer lived.
> I behaved accordingly.
> I saw fifteen suits of iron
> Four who were . . . [missing] guests.
> On them were hung doublets.
> Engelmair's penance remained the same:
> He went about with his left leg in a spoon [billed borer][22]
> His cleverness made me sad.
> Holerswan and Bezeman
> Were cut to the quick,
> Not that I cared much,
> They could have all died.
> I didn't wait any longer. Lord Ber
> Was making a conquest before the ladies.
> Hard there on, I heard a word
> Which caused me some alarm.
> Erkenbolt called from up above in the lane
> "Never call me friend again, if Lord Neidhart does
> not lie within the cask!"
> May God with the same dispatch of my departure ever
> curse these odious louts![23]

It is important to note that Lord Engelmair's rash act (the breaking of the mirror) produces the mutilation on which the fourteenth and fifteenth century plays focus so much attention. In this version, however, it is not Neidhart who revenges this disgrace, rather, it is the deceived companions of Engelmair. Moreover, it is not even suggested that Fridrauna was Neidhart's girl friend. She seems to be the consort of the peasants, as she was in the later plays. One other feature in this passage is worth

---

[22]Löffel = spoon-billed borer (posthole digger) in mountainous Germany. Engelmair probably put the stump in the concavity and stumped about on the handle. The sound of the word löffel is amusing to Germans. It also means a foolish person and is conjoined with other words in nonsense poems, see Grimm, Deutsches Wörterbuch, p. 1123.

[23]Haupt, Neidhart's Lieder, pp. 1-lii.

noting. The historical Neidhart von Reuental's visits to the peasants were always open, and the peasants seemed for the most part to tolerate his presence even if they didn't care for the attentions he addressed toward their women. Here in the Neidhart apocrypha, however, there is a radical departure from that state of affairs. The peasants are engaged in an activity which they definitely don't want Neidhart to see, and Neidhart appears well aware of the danger involved in his voyeurism.

Considering the above actions and conditions, and in particular the difference between the apocruphal poem and the descriptions of attitudes and conduct in the poetry of Neidhart von Reuental, several items might be posited in regard to the action depicted in that apocryphal literature. First, the Easter play to which the poem refers could have been a sword dance play of the variety which still survives in the folk tradition of England and Germany. Secondly, Fridrauna may have been the traditional name for the may-bride who helped usher in spring and her "mirror" may have been a figure in the sword dance. Thirdly, if the above is true, the sword dance may have been a kind of secular morality play which dramatized the need for peasant solidarity. In the paragraphs which follow these propositions will be treated in the order given above.

The association of the sword dance with German coalitions is at least as old as the observations of Tacitus (98 A. D.). In the spring, large tribal assemblies would gather to make plans for war, to allocate land, and to initiate new members into the adult society. The initiation ceremony included arming the youth with a wooden javalin (framm) before

the open assembly. At that moment the youth became a free adult who was at the bottom of the kin/political system of ranking, but nevertheless the peer of every simple warrior in the war band associations (commitatus). Tacitus notes that the young men did a dance which involved swords.[24] He makes no definite connection between the dance and the initiation rites, but a recent cross-cultural study makes it appear likely that any event relating to war band solidarity would possess some dangerous test or hazing as a prerequisite to membership.[25] The sword dance, since it is known to have existed at the time, would appear to have been ideally suited to the needs of that initiation practice.

The sword dance as a type of amusement and initiation has no certain history through the High Middle Ages, but mention of it begins again in the fourteenth century. According to Stumpfl and Richard Wolfram, at this point in history and thereafter, it is definitely associated with secret societies.[26] Whether these societies were pagan religious survivals or simply social fraternities is debatable and not important to the discussion at hand. The point of the foregoing discussion simply is that, since sword dances functioned as ritual work in Germanic coalitions from the earliest times to the twentieth century, there is a liklihood that peasant groups in the High Middle Ages might have made use of them as a rite of intensification.

---

[24]Tacitus Germania xxiv. 1.

[25]Young, Initiation Ceremonies, pp. 75, 79, 81.

[26]Kultspiele der Germanen, pp. 14-15; "Sword Dances and Secret Societies" in Journal of English Folk Dance and Song, I (1932), 38-39.

The primary evidence found in the Neidhart apocrypha supports such a supposition; it states specifically that the avowed purpose of the gathering of the peasants is to "form a new group." This assembly is the occasion for much singing, dancing, and ultimately the witnessing of the Easter play, an activity that clearly will involve swords or sword play. In the poem, Fridebolt, who is to lead the dance, is specifically instructed to bind his sword to his left side. Then, later, it becomes apparent that two new swords are the cause for the loss of Engelmair's leg. In all, the suggestion that the play was a sword dance play seems well founded.

The second issue to be considered involves the plot and motifs associated with this sword dance play. In it, the character Fridrauna seems to be the injured party, for it was her mirror that was broken. It should be noted, however, it is not Fridrauna who exacts revenge with the two swords, and moreover, since Neidhart was in the wine barrel, it is reasonable to assume that he did not injure Engelmair. This leaves Engelmair's deceived companions as the ones who seek revenge and cause Engelmair "to be set on stilts." Their discontent obviously revolved about the fact that Engelmair would be so rash as to break Fridrauna's mirror. The questions naturally provoked by this series of events are: Who was Fridrauna, and why did the peasant's value her mirror so much?

Fridrauna's identity remains a mystery to all of the scholars whose works were surveyed by this writer. The many instances of the use of the names of Engelmair and Neidhart are recorded in sources cited in Chapter

Three of this study and the meaning of traditional names receives special attention in Grimm's Mythology, but nowhere in the available literature is there a suggestion relative to the name Fridrauna outside the Neidhart material. Interestingly, however, the very source of puzzlement lends a clue to the mystery. Neidhart was a naturalistic poet. For example, when he expressed his delight at the misfortune of the several peasants who were drafted into the Duke's army, he notes parenthetically that one of them had to buy two pieces of leather for his shins.[27] That kind of careful attention to detail is observed in every aspect of his poetry from its description of the winter scene to references to the atmosphere in a peasant house. One even gets a sense of character in his descriptions of how a peasant walked or danced. Nowhere in his work, however, is there a descriptive phrase concerning Fridrauna.

Two very different interpretations of this fact suggest themselves immediately. There is the possibility that with the character Fridrauna Neidhart von Reuental deliberately created a cypher in the midst of a completely naturalistic work in order to excite the imagination of his auditors. Thus, conceivably, it could have been an attempt to draw the auditors into the narrative via his previously acknowledged capacity for naturalistic detail and then leave it to their imagination to establish or understand the depth of feeling Neidhart had for his mistress and his hatred for the man who did her injury. On the other hand, the absence of any detailed description of Fridrauna may have resulted from the fact that her identity was known to everyone. If she were a parochial "spirit

---

[27]Haupt, Neidhart's Lieder, p. 151.

of spring," Neidhart's love for her would be completely understandable without further justification on his part. Additional support for this belief comes from the fact that though the peasant maids express their love for Neidhart quite openly, Neidhart reserves his moments of tenderness for Fridrauna. It may have been that Fridrauna was the traditional name for the may-bride mentioned in the second passage cited above.

If Fridrauna was an allegorical name, the next question which must be answered is what is the meaning of the mirror? Though no statement of absolute certainty can be made about the meaning of the mirror, there is support for the notion that Fridrauna's mirror was a circular figure of interlocked swords in the sword dance play. There are two lines of evidence which tend to confirm this hypothesis; the first is philological and the second historical.

At the same time that Tacitus was writing on the manners of the German people (first century A. D.), a word was being introduced into the Old High German language. The Old High German word spegel (mirror) comes from the Latin speculum.[28] (Since the traditional wooden javelins of the primitive Germans were replaced by steel swords of the Roman variety shortly after initial contact with the Romans, it is possible that a figure of speech was born which involved both the sword and the mirror.) Evidence which would tend to support this association includes the fact that, at the end of the Middle Ages, the term spegelfechten is first found in written works. It literally meant "mirror fighting" and

---

[28]Grimm, Deutsches Wörterbuch, p. 2222.

generally denoted any ceremonial display or use of swords--a mock battle.[29] As a noun, mirror meant not only a device which cast reflections, but metaphorically, a standard of what ought to be, as "mirror to majesty" (in German, Sachsenspiegel, law of the Saxons).[30] In addition to these meanings, spiegel was used in conjunction with other words to indicate a likeness to the form (round or oval) of a mirror. For instance, spiegel-gewölbe (mirror vault) refers to the curved understructure of a vaulted ceiling, while the spiegel of a ship was the plan form of its bottom.[31] The principle established in both of the above cases is that, as a symbol, the word spiegel is applicable to any oval or circular shaped device which supports some other thing.

Support for the special use of the word "mirror" can be found in theatre history. Although there is no recorded instance of using the German term spiegel for the interlocked circle of swords, in the traditional English play, there is an example of the use of the word "mirror" for this dance figure. In fact, the example of this use which can be found in the Revesby Sword Play sheds light on more than just the mystery of Fridrauma's mirror. The Revesby play is the earliest of the extant English folk dramas and in it, "Father Fool" and his sons are having a conversation about a mirror one of the sons (Pickle Herring) has just "purchased."

Fool. Well, what dost thou call this very pretty thing?

P. H. Why, I call it a fine large looking-glass.

---

[29] Ibid., p. 2245.

[30] Ibid., p. 2234-2236.

[31] Ibid., p. 2241. The rhomboid-shaped holes in a particular type of snare net caused it to be called a spiegelgarn. The openings in a "rose" or "mirror" sword dance figure are so shaped.

Fool. Let me see what I can see in this fine large looking-glass. Here's a hole through it, I see. I see, and I see!

P. H. You see and you see? And what do you see?

Fool. Marry, e'en a fool, just like the[e].

P. H. It is only your own face in the glass.

Fool. Why, a fool may be mistain sometimes, Pickle Herring. But what might this fine large looking-glass cost the[e]?

P. H. That fine large looking-glass cost me a guinea.

Fool. A guinea, boy? Why, I could have bought as good a one at my own door for three half-pence.

P. H. Why fools and cuckolds has always the best luck!

Fool. That is as much to say thy father is one.

P. H. Why, you pass for one!

The Fool, keeping the glass all the while in his hands, says:

Fool. Why was thou such a ninnie, boy, to go to ware a guinea to look for thy beauty where it never was? But I will shew thee, boy, how foolish thou has wared a good deal of good money.

Then the Fool flings the glass upon the floor, jumps upon it; then the dancers everyone drawing out his own sword, and the Fool dancing about the room, Pickle Herring takes him by the collar and says:

P. H. Father, father, you are so merrilly disposed this good time there is no talking to you! Here is very bad news.

Fool. Very good news? I am glad to hear it; I do not hear good news every day.

P. H. It is very bad news!

Fool. Why, what is the matter now, boy?

P. H. We have all concluded to cut off your head.[32]

---

[32]E. K. Chambers, The English Folk Play (London, 1933), pp. 108-109.

It is apparent from this English sword play text that the mirror in question is an interlocked circle of swords. It is highly prized by the kinsman of Father Fool, but he, like Engelmair in the Greater Neidhart play, rashly flings it to the ground and breaks it. The Fool in the English play "dies" by having his head placed in the open center of the mirror of interlaced swords which would be, in essence, a multi-edged guillotine. This business actually occurs in many English folk dances and, when properly executed, the actor (father Fool) would not lose his head. If the business were improperly executed, however, or if a dance variant required a symbolic representation of it, the character's head could be the forfeit.[33] This mixture of symbolism and actual danger in the dance has bearing on Engelmair's fate.

The German sword dance included a feature involving the mirror which was not known in the English folk dance. The leader mounted the circle of interlocked swords and danced at shoulder height. The Emperor Maximillian is pictured standing on such a mirror of swords although the weapons were placed on the ground.[34] Records of later German sword dance plays indicate the leader stood upon swords which had been placed on a kneeling person's back, thus reducing the danger involved in the feat. Even so, in the German sword dance, the following lines are uttered by the leader as he steps up onto the swords: "On swords and daggers up I go./

---

[33]Douglas Kennedy, England's Dances (London, 1950), pp. 63-64.

[34]Kurt Meschke, Schwerttanz und Schwerttanzspiel im germanischen Kulter Kreis (Leipzig, 1931), p. 114.

I'd been smarter if I'd stayed below."[35] The German sword dance in this instance differs from the English because the threat to the leader is directed not at his head, but at his lower extremities.

If the foregoing analysis is correct and the comparison of the play in the Neidhart apocrypha with the Revesby Sword Play is justified, the action and motifs surrounding the crises in the apocryphal literature becomes clear. What was veiled in symbolic extension in the poetic narrative of the apocryphal Neidhart (the breaking of Fridrauna's mirror), becomes manifest in action. If Engelmair, the peasant chief, broke the mirror of interlocked swords which symbolized the peasant coalition, he might indeed lose a leg. That was the moral of the play. The peasants who had "gathered to form a new group" inculcated the values of solidarity by the showing of a negative example. The group was to support the leader, literally and figuratively, and the leader for his part was not to break the ties which supported him through ubermout (rashness).

The bauertanzspiel (peasant-dance-play), called an Easter play in the Neidhart apocrypha, is but one part of the theatrical heritage of the Neidhart plays. Although the para-theatrical activities which were associated with spring probably had their origin in the primitive rites of the early Germans, the courtly analogues to the peasants' brawls, drunks, and may-bride celebrations were considerably different in their outward appearance. The rittertanzspiel (knight-dance-play), which is the second major influence on the Neidhart plays, involves the canon of

---

[35] J. Amman, "Nachträge zum Schwerttanz" in Zeitschrift für deutsches Altertum, (Berlin, 1890), 200.

higher love and the ritual of courtly behavior of the High Middle Ages.

The manifest function of holding court in medieval times was to adjudicate suits, punish wrong-doing, announce new plans and seek advice. A latent function of this important event was an intensification of the bonds which held overlord to vassels. The importance of that latent function is made apparent by the fact that much of the strength of the Norman kings of England derived from their ability to command of every peer in the realm attendance at court three times a year.[36] In the mid-portion of the twelfth century, a replicate court of love was established by Eleanor of Aquitaine. That idea of courtly love spread, as did Eleanor's children, into every corner of feudal Europe. In older histories, the importance of chivalry and courtly love in the affairs of medieval life was greatly stressed. While modern scholars discount it as existing for the most part only for love-sick troubadors and point to the fact it had no "real" function in the social-economic organization of feudalism,[37] the fact remains that it was capable of supplementing the latent function of the political court. The bonds of feudal loyalty for the Duke were strengthened by bonds of courtly love for the Duchess.

The contract of courtly love is conceived in the same terms as the parallel feudal contract between lord and man. In poems written in Old Provencal, the masculine midons (My Lord) is a form of address directed to the beloved lady.[38] In Germany, the term holt referred to the

---

[36]Cantor, Medieval History, p. 340.

[37]Ibid., pp. 417-419.

[38]Sayce, Poets of the Minnesang, p. xii.

relationship of lord to man and man to lord. The lord condescends and the man submits; so it was with the tie of courtly love.[39] Service (dienst) to a lady produced reward (lon) for the man. At this point, however, the court of love ceased to parallel the political court.

In between service and reward there was a weir of enormous proportions. The existence of the court of love as a replicate and supporting substructure to the political court was dependent on a degree of separation between the real and imagined concerns of the populace. There were limits of behavior or behavioral license under the court of love. Great service could not entail such great reward that a bastard child resulted. Adultery among the governing class was not only venal, but treasonous. In a sense, the story of Lancelot and Guinevere is like the story of Engelmair and Fridrauna's mirror, in that both are moralities which have to do with the rash breach of customary behavior. When the weir which ought to have separated them was overcome or circumvented, the result was injury to all parties concerned.

Considering the court of love further, it was a triadic rather than a dyadic system. An insulating third term prevented direct satisfaction of the primary rights and obligations. Love provoked valor which was expressed in the tournament.[40] Valor provoked love which was expressed lawfully in any way but in bed. Chiefly, love was expressed in the Minnesang, the love poem, and in dance.

One of the forms of poetry which paralleled the relationship between

---

[39] Ibid.

[40] T. P. Cross and W. A. Nitze, Lancelot and Guenevere (Chicago, 1930), p. 81.

man and woman in the system of courtly love was the wechsel. In this kind of poetry, the lovers exchanged sentiments in an indirect fashion, either by paired monologues or by speaking to a third person, a messenger. In others, the lovers remained separated or were separated by the merkaere (the spy or watcher) or by a watchman (in the later Dawn Songs).[41]

The rittertanzspiel was the kinetic representation of the system of courtly love. It involved union, separation, and then reunion. The first evidence of a mimed courtly dance appears in the Rudlieb, an eleventh century Latin courtly poem.

> The youth springs boldly up, against him is his maiden.
> He is the falcon like; she glides like the swallow;
> No sooner are they near than they shoot past each other;
> He seizes her with ardor, but she flees his grasp.
> And no one who beholds them both could ever hope
> To equal them in dance, in leap, or gesture.[42]

Here one sees the basic patterns of approach and avoidance being formed. The youth seizes the maiden, but she eludes his grasp only to begin the process anew. By the thirteenth century, this basic theme was expressed in mimed courtly dance, as in the following excerpt of the choral dance Roman de la Rose.

> Then came two damsels 'tired with taste
> That Venus's self had not disgraced,
> And suited well their dainty dresses
> And wondrous plaits that bound their tresses:
> Their kirtles thin but reached the knee,
> Through which their forms showed pleasantly.
> I saw the twain toward Mirth advance
> With agile leap and darting glance,
> Then both flew forward with a bound,

---

[41]Sayce, Poets of the Minnesang, p. xv.

[42]Curt Sachs, World History of Dance, tr. Bessie Schönberg (New York, 1937), p. 276.

Just missed a kiss, then flung them round
As though they feared some wrong they'd done,
Then lovingly embraced anon,
And then once more did they retreat,
A-playing with their winsome feet
A thousand antic turns; so quaint
And strange they were, that I should paint
Their wonders feebly did I try
To show the supple subtlety
With which their lithe light bodies swayed;
Such tumult in my breast it made
As never dance and song I deem
Had done before in sooth or dream.[43]

In this courtly dance, the two maidens mime the essential elements of courtly love: they fly forward to kiss, but retreat as if they had done something wrong; then they reunite to begin anew the cycle. The closeness of this mimed dance to a full-blown theatrical piece becomes more evident if one notes that the maidens are wearing costumes which were not the customary dress of that century. The garments worn by thirteenth century men and women were invariably long. The men of leisure wore their tunics to the calf and women's dresses were even longer.[44] The girls' short kirtles could only have been representative of a short chiton from the classical period. Thus, the lines, "Then came two damsels 'tired with taste/ That Venus's self had not disgraced," may have indicated an attempt to impersonate some pair of antique lovers of whom they had read in Ovid.[45]

---

[43]Ibid., p. 277.

[44]Lucy Barton, Historic Costume for the Stage (Boston, 1963), p. 130.

[45]Courtly love was the result of the fusion of Ovid with the Arthurian legend in the history of Britain written by Geoffrey of Monmouth (1138). Ulrich von Liechtenstein's ride through Germany dressed as Venus is paralleled in Ovid's Heroïdes ix, when Hercules dresses in feminine attire for the love of Omphalee. See Cross and Nitze, Lancelot and Guenevere, pp. 79, 91.

The rittertanzspiel which has a bearing on the Neidhart plays is that of the violet dance. The origins of the festival to which it belongs are lost in antiquity, but Gusinde has no doubt that ultimately it too belonged to the folk tradition.[46] Uncertain as its origins may have been, the union of the violet motif with the rittertanzspiel was officially recorded during the reign of Duke Leopold the Sixth of Austria (1198-1230).

The historic tie between the bauertanzspiel and the rittertanzspiel may have been the result of the policy of Leopold's successor, Fredrick the Second. When Fredrick discovered his half-common, half-noble administrators (the ministeriales) were becoming too independent, he encouraged peasant independence as a counterforce.[47] This short-sighted policy may have produced an actual incident which resembled the robbing or despoiling of the violet, which occurs in the Neidhart plays. In any case, the legend of Neidhart Fuchs records that the violet was removed from the site of court and taken to Zeislmauer where it was placed on a "shrine" (may-pole) and was subsequently the focus of a dance.

Exposition of the theatrical origins of the Neidhart plays is complete if the Doctor and Devil scenes are identified as borrowings from the religious drama. As such, they represent a fifteenth century cross influence of motifs and conventions between the two genres and bear little relationship to the Neidhart tradition. These personages, the

---

[46]Though no specific folk festival involving the violet is known, see Neidhart mit dem Veilchen, pp. 11-13.

[47]H. De Boor, Die höfische Literatur (Munich, 1953), p. 366, cited by Hatto and Taylor, Songs of Neidhart, p. 5.

Doctor and the vegative demon, were originally borrowed from the pagans by the Christians, and it has been established that at the time the Neidhart plays were written, they were once more in secular hands.[48]

The ultimate origins of the Neidhart plays, and perhaps in a loose sense all secular plays of the Middle Ages, are found in the rites of the primitive Germans. The symbols and rituals appear to have survived the loss of their original meaning and function and to have taken on new significance in the High Middle Ages. The sword dance which may have been an initiation rite of the early Germans became part of a secular Easter play which inculcated the need for solidarity in peasant coalitions. In a like fashion, a motif of pre-Christian tradition, the violet, became the center of a pastoral courtly play which served to strengthen the feudal bonds of the nobility. The union of the two plays with one another, and with the brief scenes from the religious drama, constitute the whole of the theatrical precendent of the Neidhart plays.

---

[48]Gusinde, Neidhart mit dem Veilchen, pp. 107-108, 189-197.

CHAPTER FIVE

The Descriptive Analysis of the Neidhart Plays

The purpose of this chapter is to expose salient features of the four late medieval Neidhart plays. The dramatic significance of the play's motifs and certain aspects of their form will be treated. While the plays will be treated individually, certain of their features will be compared or contrasted in order to achieve the maximum possible delimination. The order in which the plays will be examined is as follows: The Lesser Neidhart, the St. Paul, the Sterzing Scenario, and the Greater Neidhart. The Lesser Neidhart, written in the fifteenth century, will be treated first and apart from the other three works inasmuch as it was associated with the winter festival, Fasching, and reflects the influence of that association. The subsequent progression from the St. Paul through the Greater Neidhart represents a movement from the simplest to the most complex of the three plays.

Before treating the plays individually, it is interesting to note that, aside from their common theatrical antecedent, they have a common origin in the literary genre denoted by the Old High German word laik which meant dance and play, as opposed to the epic narrative. This distinction fits all of the works considered here in the sense that they are in fact dramatic rather than lyric or epic. Moreover, the Greater Neidhart

and the Sterzing Scenario are plays which employ dance as a formal element and, in addition, closely follow the canons of construction of the Middle High German leich which is a descendent poetic laik.[1]

The first of the plays to be considered, the Lesser Neidhart, relates to the other three works only by virtue of its subject matter and its common generic origin. Its structure varies considerably from the pattern established by the other three Neidhart plays. Although the plot of the Lesser Neidhart includes all of the basic elements of the Neidhart legend, the disposition and relative emphasis of these elements conform more to the pattern of plays associated with the winter festival known as Fasching than it does that of the plays which celebrate the coming of spring.

The first respect in which the Lesser Neidhart resembles the Shrovetide plays, and hence differs from the spring festival plays, is that its structure and treatment of the motifs are more comic than sericus. For example, instead of condemning Neidhart and then ordering him banished or killed, the Duchess in the Lesser Neidhart rather tamely suggests he ought to leave the countryside in order to keep from being jeered (226,193, 19). In addition, the finding of the ersatz violet is accomplished by considerable discussion and a rather indelicate and presumably humorous search, as the following lines suggest.

The Maiden speaks:

. . . . . .
. . . . . .
Say Neidhart, what has happened to you?
Have you mistaken a turd for a violet?

The Second Maiden speaks:

---

[1]Paul Merker and Wolfgang Stammler, Reallexikon der deutschen Literaturgeschichte (Berlin, 1955), p. 40.

By your leave madam, you should know
The peasants have crapped the violet.
We will damn them roundly.
We will look for it in the crap.

The Third Maiden:

Lady, let us push the crap away
And search the gravel with our hands,
. . . . . .
(225, 193, 14)

Finally, the one serious consequence of the play involves the death of one of the peasants who, like the characters in the English folk plays, arises immediately because of the ministrations of Doctor Laurein.

The next feature which identifies the Lesser Neidhart as a Shrovetide play is its relative lack of integration of motif and plot. Perhaps it would be better to say that the integration which does exist is not based on cause and effect. The Lesser Neidhart play, like the other Shrovetide plays, bears some resemblance to Greek Old Comedy in that traditional elements from their respective cultures are justaposed without plot justification.[2] One instance of this is found when Engelmair arrives "on stilts" (226, 193, 32) quite without reason or explanation before the battle has begun. It was shown in Chapter One that "binding men to wood" was a part of the cannon of the Neidhart myth. In the case of the Lesser Neidhart play, it would appear its author discharged his obligation to the mythical annon or tradition in the most expeditious fashion. Another example of the incongruent union of a traditional element with the plot of the play is found in the appearance of the doctor, the oldest regenerative figure in German literature.[3] Without warning he suddenly appears

---

[2]See Francis McDonald Cornford, The Origin of Attic Comedy (Cambridge, 1934).

[3]Leopold von Schroeder, Mysterium und Mimus im Rigveda (Leipzig, 1908), p. 370.

in the play, heals the peasants, and just as suddenly disappears. This can be contrasted with the detailed treatment given that regenerative motif in the Sterzing Scenario. In it, the doctor sets up an office, heals the peasants, provides a type of out-patient treatment, and finally settles the bill. The tendency to bring together, or introduce, seemingly incongruent traditional elements or motifs is a hallmark of the Shrovetide plays. The best evidence of this tendency doesn't appear in the Lesser Neidhart, however, but in a play entitled Ein Spil von dem Herzogen von Burgund. In the latter play, the conversion of the Jews is accomplished by having them suckle "The Great Mother Sow." Sybil, who moments before subdued a fire-breathing dragon by the power of Jesus, and the Duke of Burgund look on.[4] When Shrovetide plays of the type just cited are considered, the Lesser Neidhart appears to be a relatively restrained example of this tendency to synthesize disparate motifs.

The final aspects of the Lesser Neidhart play which separate it from the three spring plays are its lack of the theme of love and its relatively small use of the dance. In the Lesser Neidhart there is no suggestion, as there is in the St. Paul, that the finding of the violet will assure the bonds of courtly love between the Duchess and Neidhart. Similarly, when it is compared to the Greater Neidhart, it contains nothing comparable to the latter play's great emphasis on the difference between courtly love and the baser love the peasants enjoy. For example, the Greater Neidhart is so explicit in regard to love and the contrasts in love that

---

[4]Adelbert von Keller, Fastnachtspiele aus dem fünfzehnten Jahrhundert in Bibliothek des litterarischen Vereins, XXVIII (Stuttgart, 1853), 172-173.

it has Sussana, a courtly lady, protest to Gübein "she knows nothing of love," while Kundl, a peasant girl, allows that if she is not satisfied in love by one, "I take another twelve on the spot/ . . . in the straw and on the benches." The love motif in the Sterzing Scenario is not explicit since only the first lines of speech are given, but after a flowery introductory speech by Neidhart, the Duchess presents him with the garland usually reserved for those pledged to serve their may-bride. Insofar as the Lesser Neidhart is concerned, however, it lacks even this type of implied love motif. The final differentiating aspect between the Lesser Neidhart and the other plays is in the fact that it does not use the dance as a prime formative element. In fact, there is only one occasion in the entire play in which anyone dances. That is the moment at which Engelmair and his "clod companions" dance about the violet before they desecrate it. In the spring plays, however, the dance is great in scope and function. Indeed, the St. Paul could scarcely be understood as a play without taking into consideration the use of mimetic dance, while the Greater Neidhart and the Sterzing Scenario use dance as an integrating poetic device.

The Lesser Neidhart play is characterized, then, by its comic treatment of the story of Neidhart, its indifferent integration of plot and motif, its lack of the theme of love, and its minimal, unstressed use of dance. All of these traits are attributable for the most part to its association with the Shrovetide festival.

The next play of the Neidhart series to be considered is the St. Paul. It is an exercise in dramatic economy, compressing all of the essential

parts of the Neidhart legend into 58 lines of rhymed couplets. Though it is the earliest of the Neidhart plays (c. 1350), its literary value, if judged by poetic standards alone, exceeds in merit all of the other works on Neidhart. It might be considered one of the last of the works of what is known as the "Silver Age" of medieval German literature rather than the first of the raw efforts of the middle class.

The sparseness of its features can best be appreciated by reviewing the controversy in German scholarship which developed in regard to its completeness. The issue arose out of the brevity of the play's manuscript and its few and relatively uninformative stage directions. The latter, for example, consisted merely of:

The Prologue: . . .

The Duchess speaks: . . .

Neidhart responds: . . .

Neidhart goes and puts the flower beneath the hat and says: . . .

He lifts the hat for the Duchess . . .

Neidhart responds loudly: . . .

Neidhart to the peasants . . .

The reader's first assumption is that this small text is hopelessly incomplete. Not only does its size seem to preclude a complete action, but its abrupt and dissatisfying ending seems to leave the issue hanging in mid-air. Furthermore, one of the major episodes of the legend, the punishment of the peasants, seems to be absent. Wilhelm Creizenach, in his Geschichte des Neuren Dramas, holds that " . . . it is completely unreasonable that in fifty-eight lines a complete play text has been

handed down to us."[5] Thus size alone seems, to Creizenach, to preclude the possibility of the Lesser Neidhart being a complete play text. In addition, he finds it significant that the "Proclamator" who opened the play did not close it.[6]

In another study of the play, however, Konrad Gusinde finds it neither fragmentary nor disjointed.[7] In his judgement, it is a tanzspiel containing not only dance, but implicitly understood mimed action. Heinz Kinderman agrees with Gusinde's conjecture that the play was acted by two spielleute and some supernumeraries,[8] spielleute being the German equivalent of the French jongleur and the English minstrel. If this is true, an alternate and reasonable solution to the problem of its completeness has been effected, since a supernumerary might have mimed the missing episode involving the desecration of the violet. Further, the plot requirements of the legend also could have been satisfied if the spielmann playing Neidhart mimed the punishment of the peasants. Insofar as the controversy concerning the completeness of the play is concerned, more significant evidence is given by its editor Schönbach. Schönbach, noting the smallness of the play, included in his editorial notes the fact that the play was written entirely on one page of the Codex, even though there was more space on which to write, had the author cared to do so.[9] His justification, of course, is that insofar as the

---

[5]Wilhelm Creizenach, Geschichte der neueren Dramas (Halle, A. S., 1911), I, 407.

[6]Ibid.

[7]Gusinde, Neidhart mit dem Veilchen, p. 31.

[8]Theater Geschichte Europas, I, 405.

[9]Anton E. Schönbach, "Ein altes Neidhartspiel" in Zeitschrift für deutsches Altertum, XL (1896), 372.

author was concerned the play was complete. Secondly, Schönbach points out that at the conclusion of the play's text, the schlusschnörkel or scroll-work which signifies the end of an entry is drawn. As far as he is concerned, the ending is not lost, rather the play was finished. In the light of the solution to the problem offered by Gusinde and Kinderman, and of the more or less conclusive evidence given by Schönbach, one must conclude that the work is complete.

Since the theme of love and the threat of serious consequences which are a part of this small play were exposed as contrasting elements in the discussion of the Lesser Neidhart play, there remains little to be said about it. In passing, it is worth noting that it relates to the corpus of the German secular drama, as does the fourteenth century Interludium de Clerico et Puella to English drama, in that it is the earliest extant example of that genre. It differs from the English play, however, in that its successive versions reflect extensive and significant changes. For example, the Greater Neidhart, which is based on the St. Paul theme and plot, was the longest and most complex secular drama of the Middle Ages.

Analysis of the third and fourth plays considered here, the Sterzing Scenario and the Greater Neidhart play, requires some preliminary comment. There has been no controversy over the completeness of either play as there was with the St. Paul, even though the Sterzing Scenario is a director's prompt book with only the first several lines of each speech given. Both have been subjected to faint praise from their chief apologist, Gusinde, however, and have been roundly damned by their chief

critic, Hintner. Gusinde says of the Greater Neidhart that, in the strictest sense, it is not a unified drama because the only integrating elements are Neidhart's character and his relationship to the peasants.[10] In turn, Hintner charges that the Greater Neidhart is no drama in any sense. As Hintner sees it, it is merely a conglomeration of loose, poorly related episodes.[11] It would appear Gusinde and Hintner, possibly under the influence of the doctrine of the "well-made play" and the dramaturgy of Gustav Freytag,[12] expected that a properly written play would progress from exposition through complication, climax, and reaction to catastrophe. Their negative evaluation of the play from this critical standpoint is logical and well founded. For one thing, a Freytagian analysis of both the Sterzing Scenario and the Greater Neidhart reveals that each is comprised of not one, but two plays, that is, two complete actions. Both plays have an initial segment in which the conflict is exposed, the finding of the violet complicates the action, the climactic besmirching of the violet occurs, followed by Neidhart's resultant fall from grace, and the catastrophic punishment of the peasants. Neither play ends at this point, however, and the prologue reappears and begins another segment which ends either with the death of Neidhart in the Sterzing Scenario or of Engelmair in the Greater Neidhart. Though it is obvious that, given the premises from which Gusinde and Hintner work, no direct refutation

---

[10]Gusinde, Neidhart mit dem Veilchen, p. 162.

[11]Hintner, Beiträge zur Kritik, III, 52.

[12]Gustav Freytag, The Technique of Drama, 5th ed., tr. Elias J. MacEwan (Chicago, 1894).

of their observations is possible, there is a way to see the plays in a kinder light.

There is a structural regularity in the Sterzing Scenario and the Greater Neidhart which, although it is not easily discerned, is nevertheless present. Its existence was first suggested to this writer by three isolated items: the structure of a religious play from the same period (the Redentin Easter Play), by Gusinde's observation that there seemed to be a regular repetition of cognate lines in the Greater Neidhart, and finally by the rhyme structure of a popular German poetic form known as the leich.

The Redentin Easter Play is called the best of the medieval religious drama in the German vernacular.[13] Its merits stem mainly from its excellence in poetic diction and deft handling of the obligatory action. Despite the sophistication of its poetic and dramaturgical features, the Redentin play, like the Neidhart plays, has not one but two complete actions within it. The first portion closes with the harrowing Hell and, immediately thereafter, the second portion begins with a scene which bears a considerable resemblance to the Devils' Caucus in the Greater Neidhart.[14] That circumstance prompts the question of why a playwright who was obviously attentive to every other element of composition would have been so careless as to join, in tenuous fashion, actions that appropriately could be two plays? The answer to the question may be that the poetic concepts governing German plays in the Late Middle **Ages**

---

[13] A. E. Zucker, The Redentin Easter Play in Record of Civilization: Sources and Studies, XXXII (New York, 1941), ix. The purely theatrical relationship of this play to the Neidhart plays is treated in Chapter Six.

[14] Ibid., p. 8.

may have dictated such a juxtaposition of disparate actions. Indeed, some medievalists have found that the chief source of medieval humor stems from ironic contrast; the placing of two notions such as "reason and mortality"[15] in the same context. Thus, examination of the plays with the idea that their peculiar construction may be representative of regularity rather than conglomeration seems to be warranted.

The second impetus to the contention that an organizing principle was observed in the construction of these plays comes from the fact that there is a repetition of cognate lines in the Greater Neidhart play. Indeed, Gusinde noted that a cycle of similar expressions seemed to occur throughout the text. Since the diction and end rhyme are more important than the meaning of the lines, the excerpt from Gusinde's analysis cited below has been left untranslated (5-20).

399,16 Got gab uns gelück und hail!	411,29 Got geb euch gluck und hail!
399,23 Ir solt varn an diser schar (:Engelmar).	426,16 Vart schon hie an diser schar (:Engelmar).
400,24 Anders ich muoss ligen tod.	436,19 Dass ich von hunger schierligtod.
401,16 Schuler, pfaffen sein uner.	437,14 Gnädiger herr, die münich sein uner
403,29 Nun wol an, alle geleich, Wir wellen tanzen waideleich,	430,28 Nu wol an all geleich Und lat uns tanzen gar waidenleich.
412,11 nach meiner ger. vgl. 418,36	462,34 nach unser ger. vgl. 449,2
412,13 Aller erst	460,16 464,17.
414,27 Ich wolt den schnöden schalk Empor Pei sein har gezogen han.	452,26 Erwisch ich im pei dem har, Ich zerreiss im sein haubt gar
415,11 Ir sein wenig oder vil.	453,7 Unser sein wenig oder vil. vgl.[16]

The cycle of repetitions in the example above averages about thirty pages in length, so with respect to this aspect of composition, one might

---

[15]See Helen Adolf, "On Medieval Laughter" in Speculum, XXII (1947), 251-253; and J. S. P. Tatlock, "Medieval Laughter" in Speculum, XXI (1946), 289-294.

[16]Gusinde, Neidhart mit dem Veilchen, p. 159.

say that the play has an excess of regularity rather than too little.

The third factor which would tend to support the possibility of some type of structural integrity in the Sterzing Scenario and the Greater Neidhart play comes from one aspect of the poetic conventions observed during this age. Specifically, the two part division of the lyric strophe was time-honored in medieval poetry. The best example of this type of division in English poetry is the sonnet. One will recall that the sonnet is composed of an octave and sestet. The first portion presents a general theme, and the second portion draws some conclusion based on the theme presented in the octave. The German lyric strophe and the Italian and English sonnets have a common medieval origin -- the Provençal Alba.[17] The cognate parts of the sonnet are in German the aufgesang and the abgesang. The aufgesang is articulated into two stollen while the abgesang remains a single unit.[18] These two parts were poetically unified by a variety of means. It was acceptable to bridge the hiatus by making the opening line of the abgesang metrically identical with the ending of the aufgesang, or by mirroring the entire metrical pattern of the first part, or by using the same metric pattern throughout. This predilection for dual poetic divisions in the medieval period of German literature led eventually to the form known as the leich. The rhyme structure of the leich offers a clue to the organization of the scenes in the subject Neidhart plays.

---

[17]Walshe, Medieval German Literature, pp. 82-83.

[18]Ibid.

The leich was like the sonnet in that it could be constructed in two parts. Its Latin equivalent, the double-coursed sequence, was often written in paired versicles which were metrical cognates.[19] Although the leich developed in the period of Walther von der Vogelweide and Tannhäuser (thirteenth century), it reached its most complex state at the time of Frawenlob (Heinrich von Meissen) during the early part of the fourteenth century. The middle class meistersingers, who wrote throughout the period of the Neidhart plays, adopted it and made even more intricate rhyme schemes than did their courtly predecessors. The rhyme scheme of these later poems was characterized by two unifying principles. The first was simply a matter of opening and closing a stanza with the same sound, e.g. A, B, C, B, C, A, D, D, D, D, A. The second principle involved the parallel structure, e.g. A//B, C, D, E, A//B . . . S//T, U, V, W, S//T. Quite often both devices were employed, e.g. A//D, M, N, O . . . A//T, U, V, W.[20] These rhyming principles, combined with an intricate metric system, made the leich one of the most tightly organized poetic forms ever conceived.

The Sterzing Scenario and the Greater Neidhart will be shown to be something other than mere conglomerates. The combination of evidence ranges from the similar form of the Redentin Easter Play through medieval German prosody seems to clearly indicate that the two plays could have been

---

[19]For examples of the Latin two-course sequence, see Paul von Winterfeld, "Rhythmen und Sequenzen Studien" in Zeitschrift für deutsches Altertum, XL (1907), 133-149.

[20]Extrapolated from works included in Karl Bartsch, Meisterlieder in Bibliothek des litterarischen Vereins, LXVIII (Stuttgart, 1862), 206-207.

intentionally created with a two part division. The resemblance of the structure of the cognate scenes within the plays to the rhyme scheme of the late medieval leich suggests there was a logical organizing principle underlying their construction.

Before an individual examination of the plays is undertaken, it should be understood that scenes within plays cannot be related one to the other in the same strict way that poetic elements are related. No scene is to another scene as a given end rhyme is to an analogous end rhyme. Thus, the correspondences between the scenes, and between the major divisions of the plays, which are given in the analysis below are roughly congruent, not strictly analogous. For example, when Neidhart is deputized to discover the violet by the Duchess and Elschenprecht, a peasant, is deputized to the same thing by Engelmair, the peasant chief, a similarity can be said to exist albeit the scenes have obvious differences at other levels. The congruences between scenes claimed below is made with the above stipulation in mind.

The Sterzing Scenario is organized in a way which most resembles the first example given in the discussion of the leich (A, B, C, B, C, A, D, D, D, D, A). That is, the principle integrative device between the two major divisions of action is a common structural term. In this play, that common structural ingredient can be said to be the speeches by the prologues which appear at the beginning, middle, and end of the play. A more detailed discussion of this and other integrative devices in the play follows.

In the Sterzing Scenario, the prologues begin both the play and part one of the action. There are, appropriately enough, two separate speeches delivered by two different individuals. The first speech is cited in full since it was very likely delivered by the director/actor.[21] It is significant that in that first speech no mention of the first course of action is evident; rather, the director asks for the audience's indulgence concerning the quality of the acting. The second prologue presumably introduces the specific action which comprises the first course. That first part of the play contains all of the obligatory events associated with the Neidhart legend--events which are presented in a system of parallel organizational units. For instance, Neidhart addresses the knights, they caucus, and Neidhart finds the violet. Immediately following this the peasants caucus, Elschenprecht addresses the peasants, and then he, Elschenprecht, finds the violet. After this, the episodes alternate. For example, Elschenprecht and Neidhart report the finding of the violet, after which Engelmair and the Duchess thank them; then the court dance, and finally the peasants dance. The first course of the play is developed through the use of alternate and corresponding sets of action. The second part of the Sterzing Scenario is introduced by the second prologue, the one who presumably introduced the first course of action. The events which follow this introduction do not parallel those of the first part; rather, they form a complementary variation or a sequel to the action of the first part.

---

[21]Kindermann, Theater Geschichte, I, 408, discussed in Chapter Six.

This second segment of the Sterzing Scenario opens with the introduction of Neidhart's son to Engelmair who receives him as the Elder Neidhart was received by the Duchess in the first part of the play. Lest this inversion be thought accidental, it should be noted that immediately thereafter the wine carter incongrously addresses the peasants as "knights and nobles," Neidhart the Elder, who is among the peasants in disguise, foolishly challenges them by shouting "Neidhart forever." The substitution of Neidhart for wine is announced and, finally, the barrel wherein Neidhart was hidden is hacked to bits, presumably killing Neidhart.

The play as a whole is unified to some extent by the final speech of the prologue (the director) which follows the presumed death of Neidhart in the barrel. He calls for the players to pipe up and the last direction reads:

> So they pipe up and join with the procession which leaves in the same way it came in.

Thus, in the Sterzing Scenario, a complete symmetry is effected by the different use of the prologues; the speeches of the first prologue frame the play as a whole, while the second prologue introduces each subordinate part. As suggested, several integrative devices are operative within those segments. In part one, sets of similar action are alternately joined, while the second part is integrated, both internally and externally, by the fact that it consists of an action which complements the first part. Although the Sterzing Scenario would hardly be called a great play, if judged by modern standards of theme, diction, characterization, or the quality of action. It would be grossly unfair not to

note that in at least one respect (its unity and symmetry) it is finely wrought.

While the Greater Neidhart also resembles the leich by virtue of its organizational principles, it differs from the Sterzing Scenario in the way in which its various episodes are unified. Whereas the Sterzing Scenario was unified by the use of framing elements and complementary action, the Greater Neidhart is unified chiefly by cognate scenes and parallel action.

The best example of how cognate scenes and parallel structure unites the first and second portions of the Greater Neidhart is seen in the opening sequences of both of these two divisions. The prologue in part one opens the play by saying:

> Silence, listen, heed all.
> Let this counsel please you
> . . . . . .
> I am the servant of the most beautiful woman
> Of whom I could imagine.
> . . . . . .
> She has in mind,
> With her maidens, to plan
> That whosoever would serve her nicely
> Should move quickly
> And not tarry.
> Should he find the violet,
> He should have the gift
> Of one whole year
> Of courting with her maiden host
> . . . . . .
> Where are the young handsome boys now?
> Come join this host here;
> Here find many red lips.
> . . . . . .
> Venus is called a goddess
> Who lets loose the power of love;
> So do the delicate ladies

Who let themselves be seen in dance.
Whoever should be inclined to courtliness
Will do this dance now.

The pipers pipe up and the Duchess with her maidens and ladies dance.

Immediately after the dance, Engelmair, the peasant chief, addresses the convened peasantry.

In part two, the prologue once again opens the action with a speech which, significantly, is quite like the opening of the first part.

Listen, I will enlighten you.
Englmair with his friends
Will come to Zeislmaur again.
. . . . . .
Neidhart will be secretly carried
In a cask by the wine
As he shall make great sorrow and distress
For the peasants
As they did to him with the violet.
. . . . . .
Englmair has a cousin
Who gives good advice.
He is called Regenbart
And is well known in Bravant
As a thorny man.
He will dance with them at the place.
. . . . . .
Fridrauna shall have her promenade
With her maidens and dance
In the village manner.
Whoever will join the dancers now,
Come together here.

Then the peasants dance with the serving girls.

Here, as in the first part of the play, the dance is followed by a speech from a key peasant figure (Schottenschlicker) to the convened peasants.

The action which follows these closely parallel introductions by the prologues is also decidedly similar. In part one of the Greater

Neidhart, dances set off various repeated episodes of action. As indicated above, the prologue was set off from the body of the play by a dance. This is followed by a dance which serves to frame the peasants' rejection by the ducal court and their subsequent solitary "courting." The acceptance of the knights by the ducal court and the conversely serious courtly concourse is also framed by a dance. This progression is typical of the whole organization of the first part. Except for the pivotal scene about the violet and Neidhart's reward, every episode in part one is repeated at one time or another. The Devil's sermon, which might be thought to stand in isolation from the other elements in part one is but an introduction to what is in essence another episode of peasant torture. In all it would be reasonable to say that the first part of the play consists of little more than eight dances, four rejections of suites by the court, four caucuses, four punishments of the peasants, two peasant brawls, and two threats against Engelmair.

The action of the second part of the play is a simple extension of part one. As it was pointed out above, the opening of part two is precisely like the opening of part one. The incidents which follow this opening represent, essentially, a minor variation on the main theme. Engelmair is once again rejected, this time by Fridrauna's court, then the envious GÜtz, Raunz, Rotzkatter, Waggendrüssl, and Milchfriedl threaten to attack him again. The outrage in this part is the despoliation of the mirror rather than the violet, but the effect is the same; the peasant Engelmair loses his leg and perhaps his life. Once again, the peasants are deceived by Neidhart as he extorts a hundred marks from them, and the play ends with Neidhart once more rewarded by the court.

The Greater Neidhart play, like the Sterzing Scenario is hardly what one would call a good play. Modern critics would likely find its repetitiousness and its episodic development to be grave dramatic deficiencies. Nevertheless, it can be said that, rather than being disjointed, there is a very definite organizing principle underlying the structure of the play. The leich, which was often divided into two parts and was highly repetitious, provides the key to understanding why the folk of the Late Middle Ages deliberately created what is now considered an ineptly written dramatic form.

If the negative criticism published about the Neidhart plays warrants a statement in their defense, it is possible to say that all four in some way are less poorly wrought than their critics have stated. The mixture of traditional motifs in the Lesser Neidhart is in its way no more inchoate than the mixture of topical issues and ancient rituals in the Old Comedy of Greece; the St. Paul is complete in every sense if one imagines its supporting mimed action; the structure of the Sterzing Scenario and the Greater Neidhart reflects a portion of the accepted poetic practice of their day. As Gusinde says of the Greater Neidhart, all have some merit if one considers the times and the youthful state of the art.

CHAPTER SIX

The Theatrical Form of the Neidhart Plays

The purpose of this, the last portion of the theatrical analysis of the Neidhart plays, is to expose what is known about their theatrical form. Each of the plays will be examined in terms of the general scope of their production, their use of scenic devices and properties, the patterns of spatial organization which accompanied their performance and their use of theatrical conventions. It will be shown that the festival occasion with which the plays were associated influenced the mode of production. Finally, consideration will be given to the extent which the Sterzing Scenario, the Lesser Neidhart, and the Greater Neidhart share the conventions, actions, and style of the religious drama and tournaments of the fifteenth century.

The first of the plays to be treated here, the St. Paul, is small in scope, makes use of but three essential properties, and is spatially organized in a simple form of successive space staging.[1] As noted in Chapter Five, a highly conventional mimed dance must be posited as an integral part of this sparse play for it to be considered coherent.

---

[1]For general terminology used here in regard to types of medieval staging, see Robert Stumpfl, "Die Bühnenmöglichkeiten im XVI Jahrhundert" in Zeitschrift für deutsche Philologie, LIV (1929-1930), 42-80.

The small scope of the St. Paul play can be attributed to the nature of the occasion of its performance. Called a spielmannsdrama (minstrel play) by Gusinde and Kindermann, the St. Paul is thought to have been a type of play performed at court before an audience of nobles.[2] The probable site of this performance, the hall of the castle, and the small, two member team of actors by which it may have been performed (man and wife),[3] would seem to account for the restricted scope of the production. Fifteenth century manuscript illustrations of medieval halls show an open area of some 10x15 feet in front of the main table wherein entertainment could be presented or members of the court might dance after the main meal,[4] while elevated galleries for musicians and other entertainers are an architectural feature often found in the great halls of castles and testify to their use for entertainment. Since roving actors, traveling singly or often in connubial pairs, played before the court, it would seem logical for them to have used the relatively small space available in those banquet halls. The additional musicians and supernumeraries needed to fulfill the requisites of the performance, as in the case of the mimed dance in the St. Paul, could well have been found in the staff of the noble household which included the court fool, kitchen scullions, etc.

---

[2]Kindermann, Theater Geschichte Europas, I, 409.

[3]The use of males for female roles in the Middle Ages does not appear to have been an exclusive practice, although the convention was associated with guild productions. Gusinde cites Bavarian and Austrian ordinances of 1244 and 1256 which refer to players who traveled with their wives, Neidhart mit dem Veilchen, pp. 29-30.

[4]For examples of typical medieval halls, see John Henry Parker, Domestic Architecture of the Middle Ages (Oxford, 1859), p. 76, and Mario Praz, An Illustrated History of Furnishing (New York, 1964), p. 87.

The use of properties and the organization of space in the St. Paul are of the simplest sort. Only three properties are needed to perform this play: Neidhart's hat, the violet, and a sword with which to hack off the peasants' legs. One can presume that the court would have frowned on a realistic depiction of the desecration scene,[5] hence that maloderous item could have been excluded from the prop list. Insofar as the matter of place is concerned, there are but three locales suggested by the script: the meeting place of the Duchess and Neidhart, the site of the violet, and the place at which Neidhart confronts the peasants. The stage direction which reads, "Neidhart goes and places the flower beneath the hat and says: . . .," would make it appear that Neidhart carried the violet to the neutral stage space, placed it on the ground, and thus changed the locale. Hence, a simple form of sequential space staging is indicated.[6]

Of the subject plays, the St. Paul is perhaps the most conventionalized, with its use of para-theatrical stratagem, such as mimed dance, exceeding that of the other plays considered here. On the basis of the assumptions of Gusinde and Kindermann,[7] one can construct, albeit without

---

[5]While this presumption seems reasonable for a courtly audience, it may not have been true for the mixed audience attending the other plays. Explicit verbal description in the plays and precise detail in the wood cuts found in Neidhart Fuchs make it reasonable to assume the worst. It is difficult to accept Gusinde's notion, Ibid., p. 11, that some substitute such as dried leaves was used in the St. Paul. The Duchess' threat of death would hardly be justified by such a mild disappointment.

[6]Stumpfl associates sequential staging with secular drama and simultaneous staging with religious drama without indicating why this may be so, "Bühnenmöglichkeiten im XVI Jahrhundert," pp. 75-76.

[7]As noted in Chapter Five, authorities have reached moderate agreement on the completeness of the St. Paul. See Neidhart mit dem Veilchen, p. 31, and Kindermann, I, 405.

any claim to historic accuracy, a description of the production and its mise en scene.

> The minstrel and his wife, each dressed in cast off courtly clothes, after instructing a member of the kitchen staff in his silent role of the miscreant peasant and some serving girls in their roles as aides to the Duchess, present themselves in the great hall of a baron's castle. The meal has just finished, the time for entertainment is nigh. The male minstrel, wearing a mask, announces the nature of the play (the Prologue's speech). He retires and removes his mask as the Duchess steps forward and delivers her lines of greeting. He returns and pledges he'll find the violet. He goes to another place, removes the violet from his bosom, places it on the floor and covers it with his hat, then goes to find the Duchess. The kitchen boy in the meanwhile has crept out from under a table. He quickly snatches up the violet, drops his breeches, and recovers the spot with the hat. He then returns to his hiding place. Neidhart returns with his may-bride and her attendants. The ladies dance about the violet. Finally, Neidhart lifts the hat for the Duchess. She denounces him and then exits. Neidhart, searching about for the miscreant, delivers his threat. When he discovers the boy under the table, he chases him in a comic ballet about the hall. When the peasant is finally captured, Neidhart mimes hacking off his leg. Then as the baron and his highly amused retainers applaud, the Duchess curtsies and Neidhart bows.

The combination of simplicity and conventionality which is so apparent in the St. Paul differentiates it from the later drama of medieval Germany. It should not be assumed, however, that the St. Paul is the beginning of the middle class secular drama which flourished in the fifteenth century, even though it is the earliest of the extant secular plays. It is, rather, a vestige of the mannered courtly tradition which was at that moment dying.[8]

---

[8]Walshe, Medieval German Literature, p. 255.

The Lesser Neidhart represents a considerably longer theatrical treatment of the Neidhart story than does the St. Paul, one which requires at least fifteen speaking roles. The play is introduced by a prologue, after which it continues for one hundred and ninety-eight verses, in contrast to the fifty-eight of the St. Paul. In addition to the main characters found in the Neidhart legend, the Lesser Neidhart has the Devil and the Doctor who make their appearance after Neidhart's assault on the peasants. Finally, this play also explicitly includes the scene of Neidhart's reward and forgiveness.

The properties called for in the Lesser Neidhart are no different in kind than those called for in the St. Paul, although their number is increased by virtue of the fact that Engelmair has stilts and the Doctor must carry vials. In spite of the greatly increased scope of the play, its property demands are similar to those of the St. Paul, the reason for this similarity quite possibly being the peripetetic nature of the production of both of the plays. The St. Paul minstrel of necessity traveled light. The performers of fifteenth century Shrovetide plays, such as the Lesser Neidhart, were equally restricted in terms of the amount of scenery they could carry since they had no public playhouse in which to perform until the sixteenth century. In the fifteenth century, to which production of the Lesser Neidhart dates, the typical location for such a performance was:

> . . . a part of the main room of a landlord or of a private citizen served as the "stage" to be played upon. Nearby was a wall for a neutral background. The door in it functioning as the scenic possibility. In court scenes (a frequent motif) a table would be used.[9]

---

[9]Kindermann, Theater Geschichte Europas, I, 4, 31.

Since, at the time of the Lesser Neidhart, it was common for roving bands of apprentices[10] to go from house to house and tavern to tavern giving their plays and receiving their quete, much as the English villagers did when they performed their Christmas plays. This condition would scarcely lend itself to scenic elaboration.

The spatial organization in the Lesser Neidhart was of the sequential-space variety. Like the St. Paul, the Lesser Neidhart has three locales clearly indicated, although there may have been as many as five or six. The play opens at the site of the court and proceeds to the site of the violet. Neidhart accomplishes this scene change by secretly placing the violet under his hat while announcing he has found it. His exit presumably establishes a complete change of locale since the peasants are discovered admiring the violet immediately thereafter. In a certain sense, this is an analogue to the "cross fading" process found in modern theatre and film practice inasmuch as the transitions would tend to make the boundaries of individual scenes less distinct. With respect to other scenes in the production, it is uncertain whether the fight scene takes place in a locale other than the site of the violet, and it also is not clear whether a scene changes accompanies the speeches of the Doctor and the Devil. The location of the final scene is much more explicit, however, as a knight says that the Duchess will reward the victors with food and drink, which suggests a return to the site of the court.

---

[10] Ibid., I, 424.

Other than the convention by which the locale is changed, there is little about the Lesser Neidhart which is not simple, realistic, and straight-forward--like its bourgeois audience. The graphic manner in which the courtly maidens exhume the desecrated violet suggests that even an act as indelicate as public defecation, or a pantomimic version of it, may have been expected, even demanded, by the no-nonsense medieval viewers. Insofar as the simplicity of the Lesser Neidhart is concerned, the dance which seems to be called for when Engelmair says, "Start the dance, my dear player,/ I will dance the best I can, I and my clod companions" (225, 192, 16), would almost certainly have been restricted in size because of the lack of playing space. Indeed, there is every reason to believe it was a tanz[11] rather than a reigen.[12] The play's simple, straightforward qualities would seem to be in complete harmony with the medieval demand for the concrete in art, which Kindermann calls the Nominalistische Darstellungsform, and which sets the period's artistic endeavor apart from the earlier, more imaginative and etherial art forms.[13]

The Greater Neidhart, which was played out of doors, is the largest extant medieval secular drama. The size of its cast and the complexity of its production rivals any fifteenth century religious drama. It contains 2,268 verses, one hundred named characters, sixty-eight speaking

---

[11]In a strict sense, tanz meant a non-choral dance involving couples. See Sachs, History of Dance, pp. 270-271.

[12]The reigen is pictured most often as a kind of snake dance rather than circle. Some of the plays in the Keller edition call for a reigen. Since plays in that edition were known to have been performed indoors, we must assume that these were performed in a guild hall or else that the bourgeois had a less expensive version of the dance.

[13]Kindermann, Theater Geschichte Europas, I, 273.

roles, and an equal number of supernumeraries. One can contrast this with the Redentin Easter Play of 1464[14] which often has been called the classic or best Easter play in the German vernacular.[15] The Greater Neidhart's elaborateness is most apparent when one recalls that the "classic" Redentin Easter Play has but fifty-four speaking roles and 2023 verses. While, in terms of scope, the Redentin play cannot be considered the culmination of the religious plays (the sixteenth century saw extravaganzas lasting for as many as forty days),[16] it is representative of the stage of development of religious drama in Germany in the mid-fifteenth century. That being the case, it is obvious that the Greater Neidhart compares favorably in size with the most elaborate of its religious counterparts.

The number of scenic devices, costumes, and properties in the Greater Neidhart increased in proportion to the increase in scope or elaboration of the play. For example, the knights are mounted on horseback when the occasion calls for it and some device, perhaps a wagon, is used for bearing the kegs of wine which are needed in the playing area at the time of the peasant's festival. The play also had a Hell Mouth, from which the devils ran, and it is entirely probable that the monastery in which the monks were incarcerated was constructed before the audience since, at one point, Neidhart asks the Duke to "Help me build a monastery" (197, 435, 25). Since the Greater Neidhart was presented out of doors, and since it would only be logical for it to be given at some traditional

---

[14] Ibid., p. 8.

[15] A. E. Zucker, The Redentin Easter Play in Record of Civilization: Sources and Studies, XXXII (New York, 1941), p. IX.

[16] At Bourges (1536), see Oscar G. Brockett, History of the Theatre (Boston, 1968), p. 97.

festival site, it is very likely that a may-pole was a permanent scenic device found in the playing area, particularly since the peasants had to be "hung" from something[17] (191, 428, 20). If not that, there is a moment in the play in which the peasants strike a post with their swords to show Neidhart what they would do if they caught him (219, 462, 1). In addition to the above items, the play calls for numerous musical instruments such as drums and pipes and lyres. In all, the scenic devices and properties used in the Greater Neidhart are as numerous and large as those associated with the religious extravaganzas of the age.

The costuming of the Greater Neidhart required special consideration. The actor playing Neidhart has no less than four changes to make during the course of the play. He arrives presumably in courtly attire, changes to armor, disguises himself as a sword sharpener, then dons a monk's habit, and finally puts on court attire. Moreover, it is safe to assume that the court dress used in the second half of the play was not the same as that used in the beginning since Neidhart appears before the peasants in disguise. The twenty-nine peasants with speaking roles also put on and remove monks' habits during the course of the play. The court itself was of necessity dressed richly[18] and it is only logical that the devils' costumes would have had to have been as elaborate as those of other contemporary productions (religious).[19] When one considers that

---

[17]E. K, Chambers, The Medieval Stage (Oxford, 1903), p. 169, notes the hanging of hides on trees as an early form of sacrifice. The contemporary painter, Pieter Breughel the Elder, in his "The Triumph of Death," shows may-poles of the continental variety being used as instruments of torture, namely, as a means by which victims could be punished through exposure.

[18]See Barton, Historic Costume, pp. 155-179.

[19]Samuel L. Sumberg, The Nuremberg Schembart Carnival (New York, 1941), p. 109. Contemporary expense accounts show that the demons' costumes were detailed and often "practical."

250 costumes may have been used to clothe the two-hundred-odd actors in this production, and that a satin dress, which could have been necessary for members of the Duke's court, might cost as much as a cow,[20] one realizes that, relatively speaking, the human effort and financial investment devoted to theatrical art in this era equals anything done today.

The process of deducing the spatial organization which prevailed in performances of the Greater Neidhart presents unusual problems inasmuch as the text does not contain descriptions of this aspect of the production. In addition, the stage directions which are provided suggest a number of staging possibilities, none of which readily falls into accepted categories. Heinz Kindermann asserts that the play was produced on a simultaneous stage,[21] as were the religious dramas of this time. Before accepting this possibility, however, it should be remembered that religious plays were popular, polyscenic works addressed to audiences "both poor and rich,"[22] whereas, the Greater Neidhart was played before an audience called:

> Lords, knights, and noble heirs,
> Also shopkeepers who can handsomely
> Affect high fashion . . .
> (162, 393, 6)

Orientation of a drama toward a single class or individual would seem to favor a monoscenic spatial organization such as that which reached its

---

[20] Ibid., p. 66. Sumberg cites Boehm, Die Mode: Menshen und Moden im XVI Jahrhundert (Munich, 1923), p. 110, who places the value of a cow at this time at four florins and the price of a satin costume at four and one-half florins.

[21] Kindermann, Theater Geschichte Europas, I, 407.

[22] Zucker, The Redentin Easter Play, p. 40.

apogee in the court theatres of the Renaissance. That system of presentation, with its successive scenic units and locales, would seem far more appropriate than simultaneous staging in which "the best seat" inevitably (and democratically) shifts as the action shifts from one static locale to another. Consequently, if the Prologue's address can be taken as truly indicative of the social orientation of the production, simultaneous staging would have been precluded as a staging possibility. It cannot be said, however, that the Greater Neidhart neatly falls into the category of a successively staged play. Although the Hell Mouth and the monastary could have been moved into the neutral stage space on wagons or sledges,[23] and the peasants could have had a place to retire outside the playing area,[24] no mention is ever made of the members of the court retreating to a stand or ort. Moreover, no mention is ever made of an entrance of these individuals. Thus, it seems that there was at least one fixed locale in the playing area, that of the court. This combination of fixed and movable scenes in the Greater Neidhart suggests that its spatial organization united both successive and simultaneous principles.

A purely conjectural explanation of this mutation in spatial organization is possible if one assumes that the real court official (prince or duke) before which the play was performed was the one who enacted the part of the play's fictive Duke of Austria. The basis for that assumption,

---

[23]Sumberg, The Nuremberg Schembart Carnival, shows pageants so carried, pp. 222-228.

[24]They leave the plan, or place of action for their stand, a locus of stasis.

of course, lies in the fact that there is a record of the nobility having participated in maskings and other para-theatrical events.[25] If the above situation did occur, the spatial organization of the Greater Neidhart could be termed purely successive, with the place of action coming to the Duke rather than he to it. In that case, motion toward the court would transcend the play space and be coterminous with the real environment. The "simultaneity" which is suggested by this conjecture would occur, on an ontological rather than a physical plane.

The final production aspect in the Greater Neidhart to be considered is the use of convention. This includes the dance, the devils' caucus, the hangings and maimings, and the arbitrary diminuation of time, space, and numbers. Though the reader of the Greater Neidhart cannot help but take note of this conventionality, on the whole, the central tendency in it and other fifteenth century plays was toward realism.

The dances included in the Greater Neidhart have been shown to have dramatic significance (see Chapter Five). In addition to this function, they unquestionably served as vehicles of beauty and humor. The courtly dances were exercises in grace and dignity, with some being pantomimic and others very formal. The pantomimic variety included the galliord, courante, and bouffons. In the courante a scene of " . . . wooing and coyness is performed after the promenade by couples. In the bouffons, procession and battle play alternate."[26] Either the courant or bouffons might have been danced by the play's courtly host. The peasants, on the

---

[25]See Glynne Wickham, Early English Stages, I (New York, 1959), 220.

[26]Sachs, The World History of Dance, p. 279.

other hand, most often did the reigen, the great round, or gimpelgampel (a skip dance), or perhaps the hoppaldei, a dance in which the peasants rushed around like wild bears, their arms and heads shaking.[27] Obviously the peasants who were unfortunate enough to be caught by Neidhart would have had to dance a grotesque stilt dance which involved leaping and wheeling about in a fashion which could only have been amusing to the medieval audience.

The medieval love of the grotesque, e.g. mutilated peasants, cannot be stressed too much. Although it has been shown that there was symbolic value in the maiming of the peasants, the entertainment value of watching them hopping about like one-legged chickens should not be underestimated. For example, in the The Waning of the Middle Ages, Huizinga gives ample evidence of the medieval love of violence and the grotesque,[28] with two instances bearing a direct resemblance to the peasants who viewed the Greater Neidhart.

> The chronicler Pierre de Fenin, having described the death of a gang of brigands, winds up naively: "and people laughed a good deal, because they were all poor men." In 1425, an "esbatement" takes place in Paris, of four blind beggars, armed with sticks, with which they hit each other in trying to kill a pig, which is a prize of the combat. On the evening before they are led through the town, "all armed, with a great banner in front, on which was pictured a pig, and preceded by a man beating a drum."[29]

This was also a period in which criminals could be purchased by towns needing amusement from other towns having an abundance of miscreants. For instance,

---

[27]Ibid., p. 280.

[28]Johan Huizinga, The Waning of the Middle Ages (Garden City, New York, 1954), pp. 11-31.

[29]Ibid., p. 26.

> The citizens of Mons bought a brigand, at far too high a price, for the pleasure of seeing him quartered "at which the people rejoiced more than if a new holy body had risen from the dead."[30]

An execution could be sweetly sentimental or the occasion of much laughter. If the victim preached a good sermon of repentence, he might soften the hearts of the spectators so that all would burst into tears and his death be commended "as the finest that was ever seen."[31]

The foregoing examples of the medieval love of what would now be considered barbarous and cruel provides an insight into why a scene of execution by hanging was included in the Greater Neidhart (191, 428, 20). Specifically, a peasant, Humel, and his companion are seized and hung by Neidhart. Since neither is given an opportunity to speak before he dies, one can suppose no sympathy for them was intended by the play's author.

Another conventional scene in the Greater Neidhart is the devils' caucus. This scene, which ends with yet another harrassment of the peasants, is an absolute parallel to scenes in the religious drama of the time. For example, the correspondences between the speeches given to the character Lucifer in the Greater Neidhart and those given Lucifer in the Redentin Easter Play are quite evident. In the Redentin play, Lucifer, sitting on a dolium (a large barrel), says to his followers:

> You shall now fly quickly hence
> And strive to fulfill my orders.
> . . . . . .
> You shall give them the worst possible advice.
> Nor shall you despise,

---

[30] Ibid., p. 11.

[31] Ibid., p. 24.

Whether they run, ride, or walk.
The halt and also the blind--
You shall bind them all together
So that they'll never live in that kingdom
From which we have been driven out.[32]

In the Greater Neidhart, Lucifer makes a similar charge to his underlings:

I bid you,
And promise you thereby,
By my love for you,
Go among them and mingle!
. . . . . .
Their souls will all be mine.
Now be ready!
Who brings his love
And can give it full
Shall have the tenth soul.
(202, 442, 9)

Lasterpalch, a devil in the Greater Neidhart, replies to Lucifer's charge in a way that would seem to be more appropriate in the Redentin play than in the Greater Neidhart.

Yes, Lucifer, it will be done,
I will go to them now.
I will give them such advice
That they will care
Little for body or life.
I will also teach
Them arrogance and exuberance,
Greediness and foreign custom,
Play, seduction, and drunkeness
And false oaths.
(203, 443, 7)

The possibilities for interpolation of the devils' speeches between the two plays are virtually inexhaustable. When the devilish host in the Redentin Easter Play returns with souls, they are rewarded in much the same way as the loyalty of Lasterpalch is rewarded in the Greater Neidhart.

---

[32]Zucker, The Redentin Easter Play, p. 82.

For example, Lasterpalch is told, "Swiftly I will crown you./ Sit twixt me,/ I will reward you" (204, 443, 35), while in the Redentin play, Lucifer says to Astrot, "Surely you are a faithful man;/ You shall have a big stench."[33]

The comic effect achieved by the introduction of Lucifer and his horrid companions into both religious and secular plays is obviously different than the mirth caused by the plight of the ludicrous peasants. In the Greater Neidhart, the peasants were not presented as a serious threat to anyone except themselves, but in both plays, the devils represented personages who were considered to be a present and fearful danger to populaces of the Late Middle Ages. After all, each spectator had heard the clergy issue the injunction momento mori, along with vivid descriptions of Hell and its chief tormentor, Lucifer.[34] As a result of this inculcated fear of demons, the laughter caused by the sight of the devils was quite probably an uneasy expression of the desire for liberation from Satan's clutches.[35] While the medieval folk, lords, burgers, artisans, and clergy laughed at the plight of the wretched peasants in the Greater Neidhart, they were not unaware of the fact that death danced with all, and that God's terrible judgement respected no claim of earthly glory. Consequently, the effect achieved by the inclusion of the devils' caucus in the Greater Neidhart, in many ways, would have been similar to the "black humor" of the modern theatre--mirth born of bitterness and fear.

---

[33]Ibid., p. 93.

[34]Huizinga, The Waning of the Middle Ages, p. 13.

[35]Allardyce Nicoll, The Theory of Drama (New York, 1966), p. 196.

The final convention operative in the Greater Neidhart consists of the use of diminuative replicate constructs involving temporal, numerical, and spatial elements. To illustrate, Neidhart tricks the peasants into drinking his "Good Father Bernhart" wine (194, 432, 10) and they have all fallen asleep, he says:

> I will change all you gathered here.
> I will shear each of your pates,
> I will shear you down to the ears
> So all of you will be fools.
> Now lie here, you evil apes;
> You must sleep three days
> Then I will return here
> And have some more fun with you.
> (195, 433, 5)

The three days go by in as many minutes. Three minutes stand for three days and ten or twelve peasants have their legs cut off in place of the thirty-two called for in the script The "full thirty-two" is traditional since an episode in the Neidhart apocrypha notes two dead and thirty wounded, and the fourteenth century manuscript states: "Of them there were thirty-two who had lost their left leg." The Devil and the Fifth Knight in the Greater Neidhart affirm this quota (187, 424, 9; 202, 441, 29), but apparently those responsible for the production felt free to diminish the number by ordering ten or twelve of the fleeing peasants to be captured by the knights (184, 419, 33).

The same tendency to substitute a smaller unit for a larger can be found in the use of the pageant. The wagons or sledges, which it is reasonable to assume transported the monastery and Hell Mouth in the Greater Neidhart, quite likely had small but detailed replicas of the

actual, or in the case of Hell, imagined locales mounted on them. By small, one ought to understand that these replicas were considerably smaller than an actual monastery or the "mind's eye" view of Hell which a devout peasant might possess. As scenic devices go, however, they may well have been quite large, particularly if they approached the dimensions of the pageants used in other theatrical ventures of the period. For example, at the time of the Greater Neidhart, the pageants of the Schembartlauf, or Shrovetide mummings, had a wide range of motifs. Some are pictured as dragons, castles, and ships; other show pastoral scenes, a windmill, and even a monastery.[36] All are very detailed and apparently functional since they show action within and without. The bulk of the pageants seem to be about twenty feet long, half as wide, and in the case of the larger castles and ships, as high as twenty feet.[37] While the Schembart collection does not picture Hell Mouths such as the one called for in the Greater Neidhart, contemporary paintings and manuscript illuminations do show the traditional Hell Mouth to have an opening which would accomodate a man standing, and a width equal to its height, if not greater.[38] In fact, in one instance, the head of Hell mouth terminates in a wooden three-sided shelter;[39] in another, the mouth joins a castle or jail.[40] It is likely that the movable scenic devices

---

[36]Sumberg, The Nuremberg Schembart Carnival, pp. 222-228.

[37]Ibid., p. 139.

[38]See illustrations in Hans Borcherdt, Das Europäische Theater (Leipzig, 1935), pp. 24-26.

[39]Ibid.

[40]Ibid., p. 27.

in the Greater Neidhart conformed to the typical size and configuration of those described above. Thus, in the case of scenic structures or motifs, as well as in matters involving time and number, the established principle appears to have been either, that a part can stand for a whole or a smaller replica can stand for a larger actual or imagined object (the monestary and Hell Mouth).

Taken as a whole, the Greater Neidhart is a rather remarkable theatrical achievement. The quantity of properties and costumes testify to the cost of the production, while the size of its cast and the scope of its action suggest a monumental human effort. Equally significant is the fact it made extensive and critical use of traditional religious scenes, para-theatrical dance, and imaginative if arbitrary diminuation of space and time.

The last dramatic work considered here, the Sterzing Scenario, exposes more information about fifteenth century secular stage production than do any of the other extant plays of that time.[41] In scope, it is smaller than the Greater Neidhart, but considerably longer than the fastnachtspiele of the time. It unquestionably made use of movable scenic devices and properties, albeit it did not employ large pageants. The spatial organization of these productions is not only, at times, both successive and simultaneous, but it is also reminiscent of the medieval religious arena staging. Finally, its conventions are in part borrowed from the tournament.

The scope of the Sterzing Scenario makes it likely that the play was

---

[41]A contemporary religious play, The Donaueschingen Passion Play, has explicit directions for gestures. See Blakemore Evans, "The Staging of the Donaueschingen Passion Play" in Modern Language Review, XV (1920), 270-297.

staged out of doors, as was the Greater Neidhart. It contains over forty speaking roles and probably as many as twenty supernumeraries. A verse count is, of course, impossible since the complete speeches are lacking in the scenario. Since over one hundred speeches of the play are recorded, it is possible to assume that it possessed at least one thousand or more verses, roughly half as many as the Greater Neidhart.

The play's property list includes the swords, violet, and stilts found in all of the plays, and in addition, there are references to chairs, benches, casks, a letter, medicine bottles, salves, a manure cart, bandages, a wine cart, and garlands. There seems to have been but one costume change in the play, however, that being Neidhart's use of a peasant disguise. In the latter respect, the demands of the Sterzing Scenario fall far short of those of the Greater Neidhart.

The spatial organization in the production of the Sterzing Scenario resembled that of the Greater Neidhart in that, at some moments, the playing space was used for the simultaneous presentation of scenes, while at other times, it was used successively. For example, at one point in the play, the center of the acting area simultaneously contains the violet scene and the site of the peasant caucus. (237, 239). Another example of simultaneous staging is found at the opening of the play when the Duchess, who is in her "place," addresses the knights, in their "place" (231, 237). Finally, at the end of the first part of the play, three settings in active or simultaneous use (246, 255). As suggested earlier successively staged scenes are also in evidence too in the play.

For example, after a caucus, the peasants return to their place and the scene then shifts back to the site of the violet. When the violet scene ends, however, the scene shifts back to the peasants (233, 239). In this instance, as well as in the Greater Neidhart, no restriction to either simultaneous or successive staging is observed.

The ground plan of the theatre where these scenes were played seems to have resembled that of a tournament. It has a plan (234, 242) or place of action which was surrounded by schranken, or barriers. The Duchess sat on some type of elevated platform, while the knights sat on one side some distance away. The area occupied by the knights was quite possibly also elevated since there is a reference to the fact that the "peasants sit opposite and below." One assumes that the cast waited outside the barriers for, at one point, Engelmair leads his group from their original place into the barriers (233, 239). In this connection, there is a difficulty in presuming that a single ring of barriers is all that shielded the plan. The directions make it clear that the crowd was gathered about the playing area in sufficient density to warrant having someone make way for the casts' entrance (231, 236). It would seem logical that, in view of the size of the crowds, the areas in which the actors stood when not performing would have had to be in some way insulated against the press of the audience. If the place where the Sterzing Scenario was produced were in fact a tilting yard, this difficulty could have been resolved by having two sets of barriers about the plan, a feature which contemporary drawings indicate was possible. This double

row of barricades had entries on the east and west sides. The audiences were seated north and south of the lists.[42]

If the Sterzing Scenario were presented in an actual tournament-theatre, one could reconstruct with some hope of accuracy the distribution of the scenes in the acting area. If the fictive Duchess sat with her maidens on a dais, she probably would have been facing the real nobility in the audience who were invariably looking north, away from the sun.[43] The knights in the play might have been seated to the east, on the fictive Duchess' right hand. The peasants would then be stationed at the west end of the barricades. On the basis of the assumptions made above, the configuration and disposition of the scenes in the course of the play could have been as follows. The audience stood or sat around the outer perimeter of the barriers. Between the two enclosures were three static locales: the places of the Duchess, the knights, and the peasants. The playing space which could be used successively would have been in the enclosed central area.

It is interesting to note in passing that the two concentric playing areas, which would have been created if the tournament arrangement was used in the production, bears a striking similarity to the medieval arena theatres associated with religious drama. The medieval religious round had the same two playing areas as did the Sterzing Scenario, but the scaffolding in the religious round, when it was used, was in the inner area rather than the outer. In these religious dramas the arena's inner area contained the static place, the castle, and the outer area

---

[42]Wickham, Early English Stages, p. 37. See also plates 10, 11, 12, in Appendix and pen drawing, p. 33.

[43]Ibid.

was either an additional place of action or perhaps, the auditorium.[44] This tricentric religious stage is a mirror image of the secular tournament yard to which the Sterzing Scenario owed no small debt. Thus, the Sterzing Scenario, like the Greater Neidhart displays an electic quality by virtue of its combination of elements of the religious and courtly tradition within the secular and common entertainment form.

Eclecticism is also the hallmark of the conventions associated with this play. There are no fewer than seven correspondences between the typical course of a tournament and the action called for in the Sterzing Scenario. These correspondences can be divided roughly into three phases--the preliminaries, the battle and the aftermath.[45]

The preliminaries of both the play and the tournament comprise four cognate activities. In the beginning of the tournament the company makes a turn about the fighting area led by pipes, drums and jongoliers. After an allegorical pretext for battle was offered,[46] there were vaunts and a challenge to combat. The Sterzing Scenario begins precisely in this fashion. The pipers lead the cast about the arena once prior to any action (231, 236). The drama's equivalent to the allegorical pretext for combat was, of course, the legendary desecration of the violet. Before the battle was fought, the marshall or master-at-arms saw to the

---

[44]See Richard Southern, The Medieval Theater in the Round (London, 1957), pp. 123-142. Most recently a study corrective of Southern has appeared. See Merle Fifield, "The Arena Theatres in Vienna Codices" in Comparative Drama, II (Winter, 1968-1969), 259-280.

[45]For a detailed description, see Wickham, Early English Stages, p. 23. A more fanciful rendering of the course of the tourney is found in Davis, Life on a Medieval Barony, pp. 208-223.

[46]Wickham, Early English Stages, p. 25.

preparedness of the field, and that completed, the vaunts were given.

The similarity of the tournament vaunts and those of the Sterzing Scenario is attested to by the examples below. A typical vaunt in a tournament ran:

> Here is the good cavalier and Baron, Ferri of St. Potentin. A brave knight of a valorous house. He will teach a lesson to his enemies.[47]

> Here is the good cavalier Raoul, eldest son of the most puissant Count of Maurevay. Watch his deeds, all you who love brave actions.[48]

The preceding tournament vaunts can be compared to the Fifth Knight's speech which reads: "I am a knight most joyous./One can hardly find my like/ With blows . . . etc." (240, 247). A similar parallel is apparent when the Eighth Peasant says: "I am Mayr of Lynden/ And I can spin the yarn./ I, your nobility . . . etc." (240, 247). The parallel between the two activities is further established by the fact the challenge to combat received a great deal of attention in the Sterzing Scenario. Specifically, Zypprian, the messenger, is dispatched with a small cask in which there was a written notice of challenge (241, 249). Since the peasants could not read, they had to be told the nature of its contents (a factor which would add emphasis to the challenge), at which point they responded vigorously.

The second portion of the cognate action in the tournament and Sterzing Scenario is the battle proper. Although the single combat or joust is the aspect of the tournament best known to modern readers, the grand finale and high point of the festival was the mêllée. Two groups of men would

---

[47]Davis, Life on a Medieval Barony, p. 215.

[48]Ibid.

rally around their respective banners at either end of the barricades. At a signal, they would assault one another until the battle was won for one side or another. In very similar fashion, the stage directions of the Sterzing Scenario call for the two warring parties to stand "armed and opposing one another (242, 251)." The next stage direction reads, "Then the drummer sounds the call to battle," the knights and peasants fight one another until Eberzant, a peasant, cries, "Good Sir, leave off./ You have won the victory/ Thus you have . . . etc." The directions then indicate that "Neidhart with his company should go from the peasants to some other place." (443, 251-252). In all, the battle in the Sterzing Scenario proceeds quite like the mellee of a tournament.

Before proceeding, it must be pointed out that the idea of knights fighting with commoners on the field of honor, as they do in the Sterzing Scenario, was completely against custom. The source for this scene may have come from Wittenweiler's Ring, written in 1400. In this narrative, the legendary Neidhart stops briefly at a village and bests all the peasants in their version of a courtly tournament.[49]

The final phase of tournament action to have a counterpart in the Sterzing Scenario is the feast at which the combatants were rewarded. At the tournaments, the ladies, in whose honor the combatants fought, gave gifts to their knights.[50] An exact analogue of that practice is found in the Sterzing Scenario when the peasants hold a festival after the battle.

---

[49]Heinrich Wittenweiler, Der Ring, ed. Edmund Wiessner (Leipzig, 1931).

[50]Wickham, Early English Stages, p. 30.

During the scene, Clara, Engelmair's wife, buys two garlands and presents one to Engelmair and the other to the "hero" Ellschenprecht, after which they all commence to celebrate by dancing a great round.

The conventions found in the first course of the Sterzing Scenario would appear to have been borrowed from the practices and conventions of the tournament. Thus, the issue and motifs of the Neidhard legend, which had sprung from festivals of the High Middle Ages, finally were merged with another fifteenth century festival occasion, the tournament.

In conclusion, the theatrical form of the four plays treated here appears to have been influenced by the festival occasions from which they sprang and with which they were associated in the Late Middle Ages. Their differences in scope, in the use of scenic devices, in spatial organization, and conventions reflect the differences found in the various festival occasions which act as the seminal impulse of their generation and as the deliminating environment of their production. The scope of each play is shaped by, and suits, the particular circumstances surrounding it. The scenic devices used vary as does the means for moving and displaying them, and the spatial organization of each differs depending on the character of the audience and the nature of the occasion. It is evident that a clear distinction between successive and simultaneous settings in the fifteenth century stage practice is impossible. Further, the distinction claimed for the differential use of space and motifs between the secular and religious drama does not hold as far as the Neidhart plays are concerned.

CONCLUSION

The purpose of the preceding essays was to expose the social and theatrical significance of the medieval Neidhart plays. Essentially, the conclusions reached are contained in each of the study's constituent chapters. There are aspects of the individual chapters and of the work as a whole, however, which transcend those parochial contexts.

The Introduction and Part One of the dissertation which were concerned with a defense of the social study of dramatic literature and the application of current anthropological and sociological analytic approaches in an examination of the Neidhart plays, have implications for the student of theatre which go beyond their particular application in this work.

Since all art is socially conditioned and dramatic art is especially reactive to social stimulus, the social study of dramatic literature seems to offer new avenues for research. Problems ranging from the origin of drama to the particular characteristics of the heros and villains in a given national drama may be approached from the sociological standpoint with some guarantee of results. It could hardly be claimed that this approach is superior to the psychological and stylistic research methods presently enjoying popularity: however, it can be stipulated that, when a study of socially reactive art forms is undertaken from a sociological

viewpoint, equally significant results can be obtained.

Of the several anthropological and sociological studies cited in Part One, two might be of use in solving problems which concern contemporary theatre scholars. These are: Structural Analysis by Claude Lévi-Strauss and Initiation Ceremonies by Frank W. Young. Structural analysis of dramatic literature from a sociological viewpoint is indicated whenever there is need to examine a corpus of popular plays which are based on more than transitory concerns. That system of analysis would appear to be especially appropriate in case the plays lack stylistic merit or psychological depth; the reason being, of course, that the absence of those qualities increases the possibility that the plays possess sociological significance. The realm of melodrama serves as an example of where structural analysis might profitably be applied. For instance, it is generally conceded that these plays are relatively poor instances of the art of playwriting, yet they reflect some of the profound social paradoxes of their era. Discovering the relationships of the motifs in these plays would provide an understanding of their root function and, thus, make for a fuller appreciation of the place of melodrama in theatre history.

The second study which bears attention is Young's Initiation Ceremonies. It offers an idea of how and under what conditions drama evolves. The puzzle of why certain nations and periods of history tend to make greater use of the institution of theatre than do others may well be solved by examining the systemic needs of those societies. In addition, one might

examine the social role-play in a given society as a means to discovering nuances in dramatic role-play. Although individuals invent the human circumstances in plays, problems of identity, role definition and interpersonal communication which form a good bit of the stuff of drama are not in their aggregate purely imaginative constructs. These problems reflect, in part, the aspirations, fears, and needs of families, classes, and even whole cultures. Study of these social entities could provide insights into patterns of characterization and plots in national drama.

Part Two of this work was concerned with the Neidhart plays as works of theatrical art. The analytic modes employed in that theatrical analysis warrant little more discussion. It might be noted in passing, however, that in the case of plays not written according to modern standards, the principles of the Chicago School of critics tend to yield more information than other critical methods.

Some aspects of the history and form of the Neidhart plays have a significance which goes beyond that noted in the body of this study. The use of the term Ôsterspiel for a secular dramatic activity such as the Neidhart plays certainly supports the notion that during the Middle Ages, a secular theatre may have existed alongside the religious theatre. Admittedly, while it is possible that additional information will push the time of the earliest known secular drama beyond its present date of 1208,[1] it is doubtful that anyone will develop compelling evidence for the primacy of secular drama over the religious drama. Indeed, the eclecticism of the

---

[1]d'Ancona, Alessandro, Origini del Teatro (Turin, 1891), p. 89.

fifteenth century religious and secular plays which came to light via the preceding discussion of the Neidhart plays seems to indicate that the whole question of primacy could be based on a false dichotomy. As Pascal says,

> It may well be maintained that the emotions of the Resurrection ceremony preserve and canalize the cycle of emotion of pagan initiation rites . . .[2]

> Pagan ritual forms are grafted upon Christian in a period of religious and social transformation to produce the first beginnings of drama.[3]

Although the bulk of the examination of the Neidhart plays necessarily involved the period after the first union of pagan and Roman Christian customs, evidence from both the social and theatrical analysis tends to support this idea of the existence of dual and mutually influential dramatic genres.

The final implication of the social and theatrical analysis of the Neidhart plays which bears some comment regards the advisability of treating a group of plays from two entirely different viewpoints. Since the ultimate goal of this study was to say what hadn't already been said about the Neidhart plays, this approach recommended itself. A judgement about the degree of success it achieved is better left to others. In general, analysis of plays from more than one viewpoint would seem to work best when the scope of inquiry is restricted enough to permit reasonable management of the subject matter. The epic concerns and style of the Neidhart plays may well have gone beyond what this approach could bear.

---

[2]"Origins of Liturgical Drama," pp. 383-384.

[3]Ibid., p. 386.

APPENDIX A

The St. Paul Neidhart Play

The source of the St. Paul Neidhart Play is a monachal script found in the Codex of the Stiftsbibliothek of St. Paul in Kärnten, Austria. The Codex was started in the fourteenth century, and was bound in the fifteenth. The edition translated here was prepared by Anton E. Schönbach and was published as "Ein Altes Neidhartspiel" in Zeitschrift für deutsches Altertum, XL (1896), 368-374.

Proclamator:

368 Now listen, ladies and gentlemen,
To this place,
Even at this time,
Come a Duchess and Sir Neidhart
369 With many pretty ladies.
From them you shall be shown the adventure
Of how the faithful knight Sir Neidhart
So contracted with the Duchess
That whosoever found the first little flower
Should be beloved by the other the whole year long.

Loquatur ducissa:

Greetings noble Neidhart.
From whence come you at this time
Or how do you feel
About this bright bloom of May?
What shall we do now
So that we may attain a rapture.
Let love's spirit be such
So that I will be joyous with you
In this May's shining splendor,
I and the pure maidens.

Respondeat Nithardus:

By your grace, dear lady of mine,
What you bid shall be.
I will pledge myself
To compose love's poem
The best I can.
By night and day,
For the sake of all beautiful good ladies,
I shall have exhaulted spirits.
If I search with resounding joy
For the little flower and violet
And find that little flower
So you must be my beloved.

Vadat Nithardus et ponat florem sub pileo et redeat:

O noble lady love
I am rich with joy
Since I have found now
The violet blossom.
You should go to see it,
You and the noble maidens.

370 Levato pileo a ducissa:

Oh to arms! To arms!
You should be punished for this
So you never lie again
And never more deceive a Lady,
You cowardly weak man!
This must cost your life.

Respondeat Nithardus parcum percussus:

Oh noble lady high born,
Let pass your anger at me
And let me have your trust!
This all happened without my guilt:
A peasant has done this to me.
He must leave a leg here as forfeit.

Nithardus ad rusticos:

Say you village boys,
You knaves and gruel fools
What did you want of me
That you broke the violet
And with your insult
Destroyed for me the fame of love?
As forfeit you must leave a leg here
And go home on stilts.

APPENDIX B

The Greater Neidhart Play

The source of the Greater Neidhart Play is in manuscript "G," The Woffenbuttler Papierhandschrift. It was edited by Adelbert von Keller who published it as number fifty-three in Fastnachtspiele aus dem fünfzehnten Jahrhundert in Bibliothek des litterarischen Vereins, XXVIII (Stuttgart, 1853), 392-467.

393 Herein begins the Neidhart play.

At first the prologue speaks

Silence, listen, heed all.
Let this counsel please you.
Princes, counts, so be you,
Lords, knights and noble heirs.
Also shopkeepers, those who can handsomely
Affect a high fashion
And therefore be well born,
Are in such an age
That they can deport themselves handsomely
With good people in courtly concourse.
Them I shall indeed grant rights
To mix in this host
And shall make known to them
Why I am sent here.
What I now impart to you
Listen to most carefully.
I am the servant of the most beautiful woman
Of whom I could imagine.
I shall speak truly,
I know full well
That in all of Germany
Her like is not known,
And God, in all of Christendom
Never made one more beautiful.
394 By her beauty and status,
By her carriage and youth,
I know no other woman on earth,
Who with her whole being
Could have as joyful disposition

As the dear delicate lady of mine.
She is the most beautiful woman
As the sun ever shone over,
And she is the Duchess of Austria.
She has in mind
With her maidens to plan
That whosoever would serve her well
Should move quickly
And not tarry.
Should he find the violet,
He should have the gift
Of one whole year
Of courting with her maiden host
And he would also be the attendant
Of the delicate and handsome lady of mine.
Where are the young handsome boys now?
Come join this host here;
Here find many red lips.
Let me be your guide.
You should live joyfully with them.
Also, my lord of Austria, the Duke,
Has given his assent.
He too will on this day
Join with youth in this host.
Come, I will lead you there.
There many red lips shall receive you
And let you dance by them.
What can be better,
When two lips laugh together?
They also can give loving glances
And thereby strengthen your life.
Venus is called a goddess
Who lets loose the power of love:
So do the delicate ladies
Who let themselves be seen in dance.
Whoever should be inclined to courtliness
Will do this dance now.

The pipers pipe up and the Duchess with her maidens and ladies dance.
After the dance Englmair stands before the peasants' place and speaks:

First I will join the host,
Then on to the pretty maidens,
And I will help the servants.
So I would be known to the Duchess
And her maidens. So I hope
That they would take me in their service.
Who serves them full of joy,
To him will come the first violet.

Iernfrid, the second peasant, also takes Englmair by the hand and speaks to him:

Good man, don't let yourself be too hasty!
My companions and I
Will all go there with you
With great joy and shouts.
We pay no attention to courtly custom.
One of us may also have the honor.

Schnabelrausz, the third peasant, speaks:

So we shall joyfully go.
The pipers must pipe up.

Then the peasants dance toward the court and Englmair takes the first maiden, tugs at her dress and speaks:

Fortune be yours!
Greeting dear maiden of mine.
I ask you to dance with me.
I will give you a garland of roses
And I will give you good ginger cookies
396 For which I have yet to pay.
A good cheese I will give you.
Let me see . . .
I want to give you some good buttermilk,
And a bolt of good raw linen,
And a penny or three,
And a good rich mush.
Also I want to buy you a red belt
And a green ribbon for your hair.

And the first maiden speaks disgustedly to Englmair and pushes him from her:

Control yourself you crude peasant,
You plowboy, you kitchen knave!
You howl in a barrel!
What do you know of me
Or what is in your mind?
I think you are full of wine.
I will not dance with you.
You have the breeding of an ass.
You offer me sweet ginger bread -
Let someone else go for it!
The cheese and rich mush
Will not be eaten by me.
Go, you peasant people, back home and
Drink your buttermilk alone!

Ackertrapp, the fourth peasant, speaks to the other peasants:

Come, you gentlemen, we shall go
And not stay here.
Englmair, don't be sorrowful.
My companions have composed
A handsome proud step
Which is in the courtly manner.
They dance it on their toes
So they don't go on their heels.
Their spurs handsomely jingle
And their courtly little song they sing
That makes many hearts gay.

Regenwart speaks and fills the rhyme:

And many heads empty,
I know that
And something more.
The people of the court don't know
The new step we have.
Have no fear
About our costumes and our hair.
In addition, with leaps and jumps,
We, with our new dance,
Have something the like of which no knight has.

Englmair speaks to Regenwart:

Thank you, sir Regenwart,
Let your dance be shown!
I see the women coming.
Come, go then!
We'll no longer stand here.
These women think they are so good
That we, by reason of their exuberance,
Shall be pushed from the dance.
Therefore, we will dance with our comrades.

Then the peasants withdraw from the court.
Schnabelrausz speaks:

Now listen, I am called Schnabelrausz.
I don't give a damn for anybody
And I will go with Elsa at the dance
And earn the rose garland.
No one shall embrace her
But me, my dear Elsa.

Elsa the serving maid speaks:

Schnabelrausz, you spirited man,
You shall have your consumate wish.
I shall be ready for you
No matter who thinks it good or bad.

Ackertrapp speaks to Adelhait:

I'm called Ackertrapp
And I'm also a wretched Lapp.
I want to have Adelhait.
With her I will be ready.
Adelhait, if you care to be mine,
I shall be yours alone on earth.

Adelhait, the other serving girl:

Yes, Ackertrapp,
I am a poor Lapp too.
You should not despair.
I will happily dance with you[1]
And will not forsake you.
No one can interfere.

Eisengrein speaks to Geut:

I am called Eisengrein.
And should things not go,
According to my wishes
That would cause me pain.
And should I die from it
I want to have a sweetheart.
I want to have Geut,
I shall love her.

Geut, the third peasant serving girl:

Happily, dear Eisengrein,
I'll do it as you wish
Though I have no great worth
Yet I do have a spirited soul,
And I am the same, as well,
As any who is quite rich.

Hebenstreit speaks to Gedraut:

I am called Hebenstreit
And I am so wicked
And also strong,

---

[1] So Wolt ir gern mit euch wagan.

That I know of no one so mean
That could beat me
Be it in anger or in war.
I am so nasty
That I would strike a cripple.
If I hit a cripple
He could never recover.
One should have to read the rites to him.
Therefore I want Gerdraut
To be my bride.

Gerdraut, the fourth peasant serving girl, speaks:

I am Gerdraut, a serving girl
And I have two breasts like pears.
I will share them with you.
God give us fortune and health!

Milchfridl speaks to Irnsgart:

I am called Milchfridl
I want to come too.
Now come, Irnsgart,
We will do the round now
Here with Englmair.
You should come with his host.
Step here, quick, to my side
And follow close behind!

Irnsgart, the fifth peasant serving girl speaks:

Dance the round!
I will follow in your tracks.
Let us see who would hinder our round.
We will avenge ourselves on him.

Saurkuble speaks to Kundl:

I am called Saurkuble
And I am so bitterly evil
That I can stand off three.
I am a bit better if two are dead.[1]
And I don't care whom it angers.
Come Kundl, full spirited
I can dance the new way.
If you believe it, so you'll get it.
One goes in, the other goes out.
Kundl, you shall be my dear beloved.

---

[1] Ich pin ain wenig pesser, den totter zwen.

Kundl, the sixth maiden speaks:

Yes, Saurkuble, as you like,
You shall make love to me tonight.
I am Kundl, a servant,
I can twist and do a bend.
When I hear mo mother making love
I almost lose my mind.
I take the groaning well
From him who gives me a good loving.[1]
If I am not completely satisfied in love
I take another twelve on the spot
Who make long love to me
In the straw and on the benches
If you can't do it, I will teach you well
How a man should love a woman;
And do it quick, I need it.
Otherwise I must die.

Schoppinswang speaks to Diemout:

I am a villager, Schoppinswang,
And I am big and tall.
I am worthy of a maid.
I carry here my first sword
And I have a new belt.
Come here, Diemout, take my hand.

Diemout, the seventh peasant serving girl, speaks:

That shall be, my dear love.
Now defy them all
So no one disturbs me.
You alone shall lead me.

Uol Hausknecht speaks to Mŭetel:

I am called Uol Hausknecht.
It would be a great shame
If I were not to have a sweetheart.
I am so endeared to Mŭetel
That I serve her night and day.
She also cares for me.
She is a maidservant and I am a knave.
We will go quite well together.
Therefore, dear Muetelin,
You should be my loving sweetheart

---

[1] Ich trauet es erleiden wol, der mir dis maine verschoppet wol.

And should pay attention to no other again.
Students and priests are not honorable.
Let not one throw you on your back.
I want alone to fell you on your rear.

Mletel, the eighth maid servant, speaks:

Yes dear Uol, my handsome one,
You and I are quite alike.
House boy and serving maid
Should court one another.
I will take you up on this.
Priests and students I shall forsake.

Gretel, the ninth serving maid speaks to Wagendrüssl:

I am called Gretel Prunzinstall
And I see peasants there without number
Who are loose and free.
Look you three dear companions
What four handsome villagers are standing there.
I will take Wagendrüssl.
Christein, dear cousin of mine.
You shall have Rotzkatter;
And, Kathrien--Gensschnoble--
He can stir your navel.
Barbl, you are also free,
Come here, take Madenhaut.

Wagendrüssl speaks to Grettlein:

Thank you, dear delicate treasure.
I shall ever be endeared to you.
I will buy you a shiny mirror
And a ribbon for your hair.
I will buy you good gingerbread.
You shall not have to pay for it yourself.

Mätz, the tenth serving maid speaks to Wisl:

I am a spirited serving maid indeed.
I see one with golden hair
I will start to follow
As I can do the best.
Thereby I will dance about
Doing it straight and crooked.

Hilkart, the eleventh serving maid, speaks to Enzlman:

Why should I care?
I want to ramble too,
And do one step
The way my old father did
Two or three,
Since I am a free serving maid.

Gese, the twelfth serving maid, speaks to Humel:

I want to be in on the start.
I see one in a red beard.
I will dance with him,
And spiritedly promenade around.

Randolfina, the thirteenth serving maid, speaks:

I will swing,
And gayly leap,
And with the boys dance the round
Here and there about the May.

Schlickenprein speaks to Randolfina:

Hauswurtz start behind me!
We want to go to dance too.

Englmair speaks:

I will do the round.
Let us dance about the May:
Come, come,
Let us do the round again.
Runzolt, Punzolt, Gundlwein,
Gump and Epp and Peterlein,
You should all go to the round.
Gumpolt, Gumprecht, Englman,
Humel and Morcolf,
Go you unrepentant wolves,
Schlickenprein and Wegenbrant
Come you, gather together.
And my Lord Saurkuble,
He happily eats a well peeled turnip
When he goes to the dance.
He eats them happily and completely whole.
And his brother Machenslaid
Is a hero without dismay.
Witzelher and Heldepold
They are beloved pretty women.
Wagendrüssl and Schnabelrausz
Should do the round too.
Now come, all alike
We will dance handsomely.

The pipes begin to play and the peasants with their serving maids begin to dance. After the dance they go to their place. The Duke speaks:

Now hear, you gentlemen all alike
I am a praiseworthy prince.
Listen and note the correct account
Of why I come here.
I and my lady the Duchess,
You should know it.
It nears the time of May,
The time which gives us all joy.
I have my heart's desire
To do away with winter,
Which displeased us all.
I and my valiant knights
And the noble duchess
Will conduct courtly love.
Therefore let everyone consider
How he feels about this plan.

Gâbein the first knight speaks:

With service and with humility
We are ready to serve you.
We will live in happiness with you
And strive for the noble love.
In truth, I would say this:
If love's noble game were ours,
And should each have
At your court a fine maiden,
We all should be exuberant.
May it suit your generosity
That each takes a tender sweetheart
And each maiden looks after her lover.
Noble Prince of Austria
Allow us this all alike!

The Duke speaks:

The honor is yours.
You shall know my will.
I will grant it to you
If you all do well.

Gabein the first knight:

Maiden, tender and fine,
Heed these words of mine:
I mean you no ill,
Rather honor and status in abundance.
Do not hold it against me

If I forget myself with you.
Rather you should be without anger
Since I can do no better.
Yet it often happens
One can indulge in good humor.
One must pay a penny
To get a pound
If one would be happy.[1]
Thus I strive with good expectations
And if you reward my service
I will be exuberant
Until my death.
It shall be apparent to you.
You should know in truth.
Indeed should I upon your bed
Quite properly warm up
And embrace you with my very arms,
I would in love's lust
Lovingly press you to my breast.
Thereafter would I make
Dear sweet love.
How could it be better for us?
Maiden be mine:
You should let me know again
How your spirits stand.
It would take you but a while
And it would soothe my yearning soul.

Sussana, the first maiden, says:

Sir Gäbein, most excellent,
I cannot do this.
I could scarce think of such a thing.
I know nothing of love,
You should ask my lady!
She can tell about it.
I will do what she bids,
Only believe what she says to you.
I hear you pleading a lusty case,
That should bring me to grief.
Therefore I would be free;
Consider yourself rebuffed.

The second knight, Parzifal, speaks to Sabina:

Greetings, high born maiden.
My heart has chosen you,

---

[1]Die katz wirft an den pachen op sie mit lustigan sachen mug behangen dar an.

So that no one can be dearer to me
Than you my dear maiden.
Maiden, mirror of excellence,
A crown, a flower, and a jewel
Of maidenly worth and good,
And in honor exalted spirits.
My greatest comfort,
My best fortune,
My happiness, a large portion
Of what I have in this world.
This is what you are most excellent maiden.
Best beloved maiden fine,
I give you my service
In the spirit of stewardship.
And had I better, in faith,
It would be yours inevitably, given to you for your own.
Noble maiden fine
Your loving appearance
Is above all other women praised,
As in the May is the green-touched sprout.
Nothing about you is lacking.
You are possessed of purity.
All is desirable
Which God bestowed on you.
He is indeed a fortunate man
Whom your excellence grants this fortune from your heart.
I speak with good intent,
407 No person appeals to me more.
Your goodness to me
Captures my spirit.
Therefore, tender maiden fine,
Will you be mine?

Sabina, the other maiden, answers Parzifal:

Parzival, my good knight,
Be not dispirited,
Rather heed my lady.
All I do depends on her.
I can neither refuse nor grant
What could happen between us.
If you want to stand by me even with this doubt
I shall grant it from my heart.

The third knight, Von der Rosen, speaks to Ottilia:

Greetings, maiden high born,
Choicest of all maidens.
Your beauty, your honor, your good,
Your deportment, and your spirit

Have possessed my heart.
So I cannot forget you.
I must always praise you.
As all my thoughts are bent this way.
Your good and youth
I liken to the seven virtues
Which I ascribe to you,
As I confess to you.
Manner, modesty, and humility,
Purity with loyalty protected,
Are completely yours,
Therefore, I shall praise you.
You are of true beauty,
A brilliant burning crown.
One finds in you stately bearing
408 And of excellence, the full bloom.
Show me your generous spirit
So honor shall never leave you maiden.
Your goodness is equal to
All honor certainly.
Your loyalty is as certain
As that of the handsome Paris
Who was always loyal
As we have often read of him.
He was handsome and splendid
As you are splendid, maiden, wholly
Love, beauty, and most excellent;
Hear me, a young man,
That your kindness would be known here to me,
An answer from your red lips!
Therefore, dear maiden tender.
Consider my plea at this time.
O, comfort me properly,
I am in your service.

Ottilia, the third maiden, speaks to him:

You worthy knight Von der Rosen,
You should heed these words,
If you would serve with good intentions
Then I will let you know.
This short while you must bide
Since it is not time
For us to conduct love's game.
Don't give up you noble hero!

Veiol, the fourth knight, speaks to Affra:

Maiden with pure virtue
I love you, dearest maiden alone.

As love of women endears itself to me,
By heart and mind,
Know that I am endeared to you
From head to toe.
If I should ever forget this
Don't think too ill of me.
It would be the fault of my weak mind
That I understood myself no better.
God be with you, noble rose in dew.
You, above all women, my dearest maiden,
God be with your worthy youth.
You, above all maidens, are most excellent.
God be with you high born flower,
You, above all women are spiritedly bred!
God be with your playful beautiful eyes
Next to your little cheek so rosy.
Your eyes can so lovingly glance
That they with love's snares
Have tenderly embraced and
Lustily bound me.
God's greetings to your ruby red lips
Which are always beautiful.
They can lovingly, joyously laugh.
Joy and desire they can make.
God's greetings to your golden hair.
It is desire fulfilled.
God's greetings be to your neck as white as ermine
That God made wholly with special diligence,
It inclines graciously in greeting.
It is sweet love itself.
Maiden, do not pay attention
To how I have rashly loved you.
Maiden, for the sake of your noble youth
Show to me your excellence.
Maid, how would my death help you?
Deliver me from my need.
Maiden, for the sake of your high breeding,
Which is about you as a worthy flower,
Maiden, be without cunning.
Your person is so tender born,
Maiden consider me
For I am your servant
With my whole heart.
Transform my pain
Which I suffer without faith.
This increases your honor full.

Affra, the fifth maiden, answers Sir Veiol:

Veiol, knight without dismay,
It would pain my heart

If you should forsake my service.
I have you most beloved in my heart
You shall be my May love.
I am yours and you are mine.
That which is honorable to my estate,
I shall fulfill it now and forever.
He who loves me completely with honor
With him I shall be united.
We should live happily now.
I will give you the garland.

Veiol thanks the maid and speaks:

Thank you noble maiden fine.
We shall be May lovers.

The Duchess speaks to the Duke:

Duke, my honorable prince,
We should have a lively spirit.
The winter is passed.
We should conduct some entertainment
It comes on the Maytime
Which makes us newly happy.
The birds all are singing,
The pretty flowers are springing up.
I say to you in truth
The leaves and grass have all turned green.
Summer is near about us.
He who now in this time of May
Can find the violet
Should let this be known,
So I can test the power of May
411 And prove that the winter's cold is passed.
He who brings me the violet blossom now,
I would gladly grant him
That I with steadfast thought
Will serve him gladly,
Steadfastly without a waver
To his heart's content.
You maidens tell me how that suits you.
Let me hear your counsel!

Neidhart speaks in joyful tones:

How could it be better for me
If I find the little flower
So you can prove it is May.
We will dance and do the round.

Lady, give me your blessing!
I have wholly committed myself
And my mind is so inclined
I will now at this time
Search for the violet and find it.
So among all of the children of the court
The honor would be mine,
So will the red lips
In deference bid me their greeting.
My heart would be without pain.
I should be without all sorrow
If I can find the violet.

The Duchess speaks to Neidhart:

You noble Neidhart most exuberant,
God give you fortune and health.

Neidhart goes and searches for the violet happily with singing. And when he finds the violet he speaks:

Greetings wonderful little flower
It is good that I have found you
Since you are the violet
412 From which joy is to come to us.
I will always say that.
Now I shall let you be picked
By the most beautiful woman ever,
I mean my lady, the Duchess.
I will give her the honor and joy.
You will be kissed by red lips.
To her I shall quickly go.

And he covers the violet with his hat.

By this sign I will find you.
If it goes the way I like,
I will bring her with all her maidens here.
But first I will start
To sing what I have learned.

Neidhart returns home to the Duchess with joyous song. He is happy. And Enzlman takes the hat off and picks the violet: he craps on the spot where the violet stood and covers it again with the hat. The duchess speaks to Neidhart:

Neidhart, why are you happy?
If you know something good tell it!
I and these maidens fine
Should all be happy with you.

Neidhart speaks:

Noble lady rejoice,
I must tell you the truth.
I found a wonderful violet.
Immediately I took my hat
And covered it over the violet.
I did it in the hope
That I am your servant,
And it occurred to me
That you should be there
With all your maiden host,
Both knights and squires.
When I take you there
You should pick the violet,
You should have the honor yourself.
Truly lady, know this,
This enhances you and no one better.

The Duchess speaks to Neidhart:

Thank you, you worthy Neidhart,
We will go there at this time.
With drums and lyres
We shall make diversions.
With pipes and schalms
We shall dance about it.
We will on that joyous spot
Receive dear summer.
What I say I certainly mean.
Send for the players and do the dance!

Neidhart speaks:

Lady, I will do this gladly,
Since you will help me.
You players, play sweet tunes for us.
I will reward you richly for it.

They pipe up with joy and they happily go with one another to the violet
Neidhart leads the Duchess and dances about the violet.
Neidhart speaks:

Truly, lady, I think it good
That you lift the hat
So summer shall appear to you.
Since of all the blossoms
None is more delightful, nor ever will be
Than this noble violet tender
Which I covered with my hat,

And since no one deserves the honor more
Than you. Lift the little hat!
Under it is the violet.

The Duchess lifts the hat and they see the turd laying under it. They are horrified: they look at one another. The Duchess speaks to Neidhart with revulsion:

Oh, Neidhart, how could you?
The disgrace that you have done me
Seems too much to me!
To have you play a joke on me
And all the maidens who are here!
Believe me in truth,
You shall have a greater disgrace from me
If God grants me life.
Your good word I believed full well.
Your heart is full of infamy.
This violet is the devil's gift!
We will rejoin the court.

So the Duchess with her maidens in attendance go silently to the court and the knights remain. Neidhart speaks:

Woe now and forever,
Woe my great honor,
That I ever saw the violet.
Woe on what has happened to me!
I stand in disgrace.
It shall cause me pain forever.
Woe with pain and sorrow!
I must be separated from
Those many red lips.
And the grace of my lady.
I have lost without being guilty.
It would be better if I had never been born
Rather than have engaged in such iniquity.
I want to raise by the hair
The rude churl
Who did this disgrace to me

And who was stealthily treacherous to me.
If I had been wise
As I am now
I would thought well
Of how I could resist him.
Now I am in great disgrace
Caused by the boorish peasants.
I will make him sour,
By my word, I mean that.

I would warp his leg
Except that he is unknown to me.
He was quick in craft,
He hid himself so I wouldn't find him
So I must pay for that which I never enjoyed.

The first knight Gȗbein speaks to Neidhart:

Look Neidhart if I find him
Give me this which I have never enjoyed.
Whosoever of the peasants will stand by him,
Whether many or few,
Young, old, big, or little,
From them we shall hew off their legs
And leave them no life
That is the advice I would give.
Truly, Neidhart, believe me,
My life and goods I pledge to you.

The fifth knight speaks:

I am also one whom this concerns
Since this does us much evil,
And we must be even more disgraced.
Should we let them go
It would always cause me pain.
And I will always be ready
To strike low the rude villagers
Like a pile of ill-stacked bricks.

The sixth knight speaks:

We will put an end to this without delay
And find him who is guilty.
Neidhart, take charge of the matter
We don't want to this be,
We want to revenge this with our hands;
That they ever shamed you thus
Must cause me sorrow always,
Since it brings me great pain.

The seventh knight speaks:

I see well we are of accord.
Each of us speaks to you
Each will diligently help you.
Take from all of us our vow
That none of us will give up,
Rather, follow you in good faith.
If we come upon them,
We will let none get away.

The eighth knight speaks:

Neidhart, If you would bring this to an end,
We should quickly go
To the area near Zeislmaur.
There come many boorish peasants,
An unruly large host.
Their chief is called Englmair.
He has bid them come
To dance a round
With Fridauna, as I will tell you.
She is also bringing many serving girls.
There they will have a good dance.
Gump and Epp shall sing at first.
They called the dance eight days ago,
It can come off with ease.

Neidhart speaks to his squire:

Quickly, bring me my sword.
I will do as you have advised.
We will go to Zeislmaur
And see what the peasants are doing there.
Let us put on our armor
I bid you not to leave
In order that you serve me.
You should help me steadfastly.
What you would do, do well!
417 I think the dance is starting
Even as we are prepared to go.
The dance will have its end.
Boy, off to Zeislmaur,
See what the peasants are doing.
So we will know what to expect.
So none of them escape us.

The boy goes to Zeislmaur to observe what the peasants are doing. They dance and the boy dances too. In the meantime, Neidhart and the knights put on their armor. After the dance, Englmair speaks:

Has anyone come here
Who knows a new story
Or how things are at the court now?
A messenger told me this morning,
He swore quite solemnly
The knights have lost their grace at court
Does anyone know why that should be?

Wisel, a peasant fills the rhyme and speaks:

Yes, cousin Englmair, I know the whole of it.
One named Neidhart
Who was of the Duchess most beloved
And confident to the Duke,
He came here recently,
Searched for and found a little flower.
It could have been a violet.
He covered it with his hat.
Immediately he had exalted spirits.
He left there singing.
There was another one there who noticed him
Whom Neidhart did much sorrow.
He wasn't about to let it drop at that.
He plucked the violet
And wanted to avenge himself.
He lay in the violet's place
Another violet which he had
And with which he brought the knights from grace.

418 Hebenstreit, a peasant speaks:

Oh, how well he considered it,
He that broke the violet:
How he has well avenged us!
We were supposed to dance at court.
There we were struck down like ten pins
Because of his strutting.
Now he has lost the honor himself.
He who did this pleases me even more,
He who blunted his hate.

Enzlman a peasant speaks:

Gentlemen, I tell you this,
About the envy and the hate
That Neidhart has for us,
Of that which he conceived quite happily.
He went into the clover,
There he saw standing a violet.
With joy and exuberance,
He covered it with his hat.
He wanted to come to court with it.
He got no use from it.
He never looked around.
Now pay attention,
I did it secretly.
I stole the violet
And crapped there in the place
Over which the hat on the violet lay.

Regenbart speaks to Enzlman:

Good work, Enzlman;
He did us a lot of harm,
He made us all in ill repute
Among the lords.
Therefore it matters little to me
How much disgrace is brought on him!

Ackertrapp a peasant speaks:

It would please me a great deal
If he would also come here.
However good he thinks himself,
I and my companions
Will have the honor over him
Unless misfortune occurs.
So we will come too and jump up high.
Cousin Englmair, lead again!

The pipes pipe up. The peasants begin to dance again. After the dance, Neidhart's squire goes to Neidhart and the knights and says:

Gentlemen, I have made certain
Englmair is at Zeislmaur
With forty peasants or more
Who all hate you.
I have it straight from their mouths
They would be happy to see you coming.
If you would have something to do with them,
Start now and do not tarry!

The ninth knight speaks to Neidhart:

Neidhart assume the position
Of chief among us,
And go quickly to them
So none of them get away.
If they will stand to fight
Then we will fell them all.

The tenth knight speaks:

We must go far and wide.
Let us start, it is time.
If none of them will stand us in fight,
We will strike them down quickly.

The peasants begin to dance again. Fridrauna does not dance.
She sits in a long cloak near the dance. The knights come on
the dance to capture the peasants. The peasants flee except
for ten or twelve who are captured by the knights. Englmair
hides himself under Fridrauna's cloak. Neidhart speaks:

Hold them fast and lead them away!
It is set in my mind
That no one is so proud.
I want to attach them to some wood.

Pipes and flourishes. The knights bind stilts on the peasants' legs one after another. Afterwards the peasants stand up and Enzlman speaks.

Oh pain and anguish are ever mine.
Now we must sadly be distraught.
Because of this accursed violet
Which Neidhart first found,
We must pay a heavy toll.
What a large forfeit
Is that, when none of us
Has his left leg.
Who will dance now with Fridrauna,
With her and with Waldrauna,
And with the other young maidens,
Since our agility has been taken?
Who shall wake the May for us
Since we walk on stilts?
We must leave the grass be
And also shun the dance.
At Zeislmaur on the green
Stands Englmair, who still has a whole ham.
From us he stole like a thief.
It makes Fridrauna his Heart's desire
Under whose coat he fell,
Thereby saving his leg.

Regenbart speaks:

Enzlman, I have heard well
Your rowdy words,
They concern my cousin Englmair.
Be certain before a year is gone
We shall so earnestly care for you

That the plums and beans
You would have eaten will remain in the ground.
My cousin Englmair is so fresh
He doesn't take anything from you
No matter how you now
Avoid him. He can eat prunes
And he has proved it well.
In a broad pasture
He craps more than six other peasants.
He let that be known
When he crapped a hatful.
That our legs are mangled
Was caused by you alone.
Someone help me to avenge it.
I will break you apart,
Head, mouth, teeth and palate,
So you never bite a plum again.
And know that I will not let this go.
I will beat your head to splinters.

Enzlman speaks:

Regenbart, believe me
I am as concerned about Englmair as you.
I swear that as loyally as I should.
I grant him his good health gladly.
All that we did would have been in vain
If it weren't for Englmair.
Therefore, do not think the worst of me.
Go, I will give you something.

And the peasants go to one another. The knights go to the court, but Neidhart remains. The Duke speaks to the knights:

Tell me from where you've come now.
Come and pay heed!
Where were you this afternoon?
Why should you dishonor
My wife who is dear to me?
And tell me, as you know,
Which of you had the temerity
To cause me this sorrow?
None of you is so dear to me
That I wouldn't hang him like a thief.

Parzifal, the second knight, speaks:

Gracious lord, it is truly not our fault.
We have had anxiety
About that story
And would set you right

On how it came about.
Neidhart found the violet.
A peasant noticed him,
Who secretly had stolen there.
He did as all the wicked
And soiled under Neidhart's hat,
As you have heard from our lady.
Then Neidhart came after them
And thought so much of the disgrace
That he put them on stilts,
A full thirty-two of them.
Dear sir, now be understanding
And thus have patience.
If none of us is guilty of this
Or never wanted it,
You should not make us pay for it.

Von der Rosen, the third knight, speaks:

In truth, gracious sir, you know
That among us there is no one
Who could not swear on his work.
Neidhart is as sorry
As anyone living on earth.
Therefore give him your favor.
This increases your honor full.
Neidhart shall promise you
And my lady the Duchess
That he shall never grant peace
Against them that took your favor from him,
Should it cost him his life.

The Duke speaks to the knights:

Tell Neidhart to come here.
He should take good cheer.
I shall help him as I can
To rid my wife of her anger for him.

The fourth knight goes to Neidhart and speaks:

Neidhart, my gracious lord would have of you
That you should come to the court.
I hope everything goes well for you.
Go and have a joyful spirit.
I hope everything gets better for you.
We reviled and disgraced the peasants.

Neidhart goes to the court, stands at a distance and speaks to the Duke:

Gracious lord, what do you want,
That you have sent for me.

The Duke answers Neidhart:

Neidhart you should know
All the anger and all the hate
Which I had for you
I shall allow to go out of my heart.
Because of your faithful knighthood
And because of your service, steadfast
To my wife and me
You shall serve her again.

And he speaks to the Duchess:

Lady, I do ask this of you.
If Neidhart did anything against you
Return your favor,
Since it was not his fault,
Concerning the wicked rude violet.
424 We all know this now.

The fifth knight speaks:

Yes, Lady, I speak as truly as I should.
I vouch
That Neidhart was not happy
And he contrived so
That he punished them well.
Thus he broke
Thirty-two of their left legs.
They must, without exception
Creep on stilts and crutches.
They can be happy at that.
He behaved in such a knightly way
That you may well restore him in good graces again.

The Duchess speaks:

Should he not be in good graces
He might be sorry for
Long service, which he performed
From his childhood on for many years.
Since he was well versed in knighthood
With its jousts, mock battles, and knightly skills
My lord made him a knight.

I know well that many lords
Are sour and bitter
About the crimes the peasants do us.

The Duke speaks to the Duchess:

What your desire is shall be mine, lady.
I will of my goods
Give and fief him so much
That he can live in knightly fashion.
Come here to me, Neidhart.

Then Neidhart goes to him.

I would give some advice to you
Think steadfastly of the shame
The peasants have heaped on us
And avenge yourself with manly craft.
Thus retain your knighthood.
Strummpuechl and the Kaisertal
Three miles wide in all
Shall be yours,
Tax, toll, and wine
I will give you as fief.
You shall have this from me.
All that which belongs to me there,
I will grant you quite freely.

Neidhart speaks to the Duke:

Thank you, Sir. Your excellence I shall thank forever
And will never cease.
All my friends
And all the companions I can get
Shall serve you willingly.
Concerning this which
You have so generously granted me,
I believe that such a noble deed
By a prince has never been encountered
From the beginning of the world
As that which you have done me.
This must be praised
From my lips
Deep from the bottom of my heart
Without end so long as I shall live.
Such praise must be yours too
My dear delicate lady.

The Duchess offers Neidhart her hand.

Never was there a more praiseworthy woman.
Her goodness she has granted me
So that I from my heart's joy
Never more forget.
While I have life,
Whatever service I can do for you
I shall never let go undone.
Sir, I would depart here.
God save you from sorrow.
Your good and honor God shall protect.
Bid me and allow me to go.
I want to return to the peasants
And teach them a new dance.

Drink is brought the prince and princess. The Duke gives something to Neidhart to drink and Neidhart gives the maidens something to drink one after the other, then goes. The peasants begin to dance again and Neidhart comes to them in the guise of a sword sharpener. After the dance Eisengrein, a peasant, speaks:

Englmair, Englmair
Come to this host
With our cousin Matz
So you will not be unhappy.
Lead her in the round
So we do not split the dance in two.

The servant girls go to their place. Englmair speaks to Eisengrein:

Eisengrein how do you get that?
I don't move at your command.
I carry a sword at my side.
I will let it be sharpened.
The rain
And the wind have made it useless.
I will go this way,
I see a master standing there.
I will let him sharpen my sword.

Wagendrüssl a peasant speaks:

I will let mine
Be done too, so it shines.

Englmair, Wagendrüssl, Hummel, Uol Hausknecht, and Schnabelrausz go to the sword sharpener.
The other peasants stay at their place.
Englmair speaks:

Dear Master Sword Sharpener,
427 I am a spirited hero.
It's getting on to May.
Matz and Irmel are doing the round.
I must have a new sword.
I'm worthy of a girl.
My sword is rusted.
Whatever it will cost,
You should sharpen it.
Then I shall gladly reward you.

Neidhart speaks:

Sir I will gladly do that.
I assure you.
In knowledge and mastery
I am well versed.

Hummel speaks to Neidhart:

Master, take my pay
And make my sword beautiful too!

Neidhart speaks:

Lay it down for me!
I shall return it to you
Beautiful, fine, light, and shiny,
Believe you me indeed.

Uol Hausknecht calls Schnabelrausz

Come, come Schnabelrausz!
Let's get our swords sharpened too.

Neidhart speaks:

Lay them all down.
I can do this with mastery.

And he takes the peasants knives and speaks:

And now listen: now look,
428 I am Neidhart the knight
Whom all of you disgraced.
You did it to me at this place.

You villagers and you boors!
I have the swords by the hilt
I will renovate them in you,
Sticking and thrusting as in a pig.

The peasants take off with Neidhart after them with a naked sword,
and he grabs Humel and another with him. Neidhart speaks:

Stand you gallows birds,
Let justice be done!
You must ride the gallows.
I can hardly wait.

Humel speaks:

Dear lord Neidhart, let me live.
I will give myself as a serf to you.

Neidhart speaks:

Silence! You are alien to good advice.
I will hang you from a beam.

Neidhart hangs Humel and his campanion. The other peasants gather at their place. Saurkübel speaks:

Gentlemen, I will tell you all
We should complain to the Duke
That he hung our companions.
Perhaps he will be imprisoned.

Schoppenswang speaks:

Truly cousin you are right.
Let's go, gentlemen, to the court.

The peasants go to the Duke and complain about Neidhart.
Waggendrüssl speaks:

You noble prince of Austria.
We all complain
429 About Neidhart, the evil man,
Who has done us much sorrow.
We ask you in the name of God,
To give us his life.
Humel hangs there much to our shame.
Neidhart comes from a foreign land.
Humel was a good boy,
He truly did him an injustice.

The Duke speaks:

Gentlemen, I tell you thus,
You have great hate and envy for him.
You love him not a wit,
You have done him much evil.
I don't care about this.
Now take the dead man
And bury him in the earth.
It will make no difference to him anyway.

Waggendrüssl speaks:

Gentlemen, I tell you truly
Englmair caused us this shame.
We should run him through
And avenge ourselves on him.

Englmair speaks:

You are a coward with a vengeance.
In truth I say this,
Our friend lies dead.
You all want to fight it out.
Do it with the whore
You yourself pick out.

Schlickenbrein speaks:

So you will always pass over
The same that has been done to us.
We want to avenge it here
With blows and threats.

Enzlman speaks:

So we shall all right,
And rain blows upon each other.

The peasants strike one another and after the fight
Hebenstreit speaks:

Gentlemen come now,
We should leave off war.
Englmair now do the round
And let us dance about the May
And wait for Neidhart.
If you come across him somewhere,
No matter where he is in the land,
I will bring him to shame.

Eisengrein speaks:

You gentlemen, I tell you this,
I bear him hate and envy,
And if I knew just enough
I would toy with him.
He would give me his life
Or I am not called Eisengrein.

Englmair speaks:

So wait for the chance
That if he ever dances with us
So we shall come
And take his life.
So we must dance about the May again
Leaping and doing the round.
Now come all alike
And let us dance quite spiritedly!

Then the peasants dance again. Neidhart comes in the guise of a monk. After the dance Schottenschlicker speaks:

You gentlemen, I will tell you
It nears holy days
On which one tells his guilt
And repents his sins.
I see a chaplain there,
The sins which I have done
I will lay before him
If he will forgive them.

Hebenstreit speaks:

I know that gentleman well,
He is full of the holy spirit.
He is named Brother Percholt
I have thought well of him now for a long time.
Whatever one tells him
He forgives immediately.
So I will do as you and
Make a full confession.

The two peasants Schottenschlicker and Hebenstreit go to the monk Neidhart. Schottenschlicker speaks:

Sir, I beg of you humbly
To hear my confession
Of what I repent to you
And what I have committed during my days.

Neidhart speaks:

Child, if you would be taught by me
Then I will hear you gladly.
Kneel down good man. Tell me
What have you done?

Schottenschlicker kneels down before Neidhart and confesses:

I will tell all.
I begin with the biggest ones.
You should know I bear
Great malice and hate for
My enemy Neidhart.
He will not be spared any longer.
Wherever I find him
I will take his life.

432 Neidhart speaks:

I want to tell you good man,
You have done many sins,
Your guilt is too great.
You can't be freed by me.
Sit at this place.
I will bring my companion quick,
So he will absolve you.
I am unable to forgive you.
Here, drink a good Bernhart[1]
So luck won't leave you.

Schottenschlicker drinks and then lies down and sleeps. Neidhart speaks to the other peasants:

God's greetings to you standing there.
I have schriven your two companions.
They were too much full of wickedness,
Therefore I will send someone else.
He will forgive them quick and fast.
You dear gentlemen drink with me!
There's good wine here.
I have blessed it with St. Johann's love
Against sprains, against diarrhea, and against everything evil.
Begin, dear Saurkübel.

---

[1]Se hin, trink ain guten Bernhart.

As soon as Saurkübel drinks he speaks:

Sir, the wine appeals to me.
If I drank much I would soon be full.

Neidhart speaks:

Gentlemen, take the bottle and all drink!
See how the wine will please you.

The peasants drink and get drunk and fall to the ground. Geirsnabel speaks:

Thank you sir, you're a brave one.
This wine is good and strong too.
We all like it,
433 We are all full.
My companions have laid themselves down to sleep.
I must be myself down too.

And he falls asleep too. Neidhart speaks:

I will change all of you gathered here,
I'll shear each of your pates.
I will shear you down to the ears
So all of you will be fools.
Now lie here you evil apes;
You must sleep three days
Then I will return here
And have some more fun with you.

Neidhart puts monks' habits on them and then leaves them.
Madlhaubt wakes, stands, and speaks:

In God's name what manner is this?
Is it me or isn't it?
What happened to me
That I was made into a priest?
Have I changed today
And become a monk without learning?
Who gave this to me?
I think I was a peasant.

Rotzkatter speaks:

Now what has happened to me too?
Now I am quite bare
And I know well I had a hair.
Now I am shorn completely
And have a monk's habit on,
Yet I am unlettered.

Geirschnabel speaks:

Now look at me, I am a priest.
What a lazy living I will make.
If I knew singing or reading
I would want to be a monk forever.

434 Schoppinswang speaks:

Dear companions, we are brothers
And are indeed beshorn,
And we wear the preaching orders.
Therefore we will not give it up.
We will go to a monastery
And stay with other monks.

Rotzkatter speaks:

I will give some good advice.
If we find one who is learned
We should go with him in the order
And be subordinate to him.

Hebenstreit speaks:

Dear companions I see someone far away.
I imagine he is some foreign lord.
Perhaps God will look after us here
By having him enlighten and teach us.

Neidhart comes in the guise of a monk and speaks:

God's greetings my dear brothers.

The peasants answer and speak:

God's thanks, dear sir so fine!

Neidhart speaks:

What is your business here?

Schoppenswang speaks:

Sir, we don't know how
It is that we have been done so;
Why we changed to monk's habit
And know neither singing nor writing?
Three days ago we were peasants.

Neidhart speaks:

I tell you dear children,
This is God's sign
That he has changed all of you.
All of you together will be fully learned
When the holy ghost comes to you.
I know a monastery which is new,
There are few brothers there.
If you would like to go from here with me
I'll lead you there today.
The Duke respects me there,
I am his good chaplain regularly.
For my sake he will gladly support you.

Geirschnabel speaks:

God's thanks, dear holy man,
If it is near or far,
We will all go with you.
Dear Sir, retain us in your goodness.

Neidhart speaks:

I happily do what I should.
Come then, Brothers, and be of good cheer.
Stay until I ask the lord about this.
I will come as quickly as I can.

Neidhart goes to the Duke and greets him but the peasants remain at a distance. Neidhart speaks:

God's greetings, dear Sir and dear Lady.
Help me build a monastery.
God has sent us to you.
I have brought a whole convention.
I have blessed them all.
Come, whoever would confess,
He can rid himself of sin.

The Duke fills the rhyme and speaks:

Sir Neidhart, you are a good man.
What do you have in mind with these monks
That you brought them here?
You must build a monastery for them yourself.

Neidhart speaks:

Dear Sir, it's just peasants
Whom I have shorn.

They will be very angry today
When I tell them the truth,
That I am Neidhart the knight.

Neidhart leads the peasants in the monastary. The Duke accompanies him. Schoppenswang speaks:

Oh what trouble I have
My belly is empty.
I would gladly do without my monk's habit,
It lies heavy on my head,
And if I had some hot whey
I would trot about quite spiritedly.

Madenhaubt speaks:

Yes, I too would happily eat.
I hear the calves calling
Because I will soon lie dead from hunger.
If I had a piece of bread,
If I were home at my father's place,
Then I would have a roast of veal.
There stands my father's mare and
Whinnies at the gate.
No one hears her sound.
I want to sing and call.

The peasants sing with one another:

Oh, I have a gaping hole.
If I only had a big meal.
The cow is yet unmilked.
How can I fill myself now.

The Duke and Neidhart go out again and the peasants begin to sing again, each one what he will.
Schnabelrausz speaks:

Oh how low all you are.
437 I will hit you with a club.
The monk has indeed made fools of us.
I know for certain
Truly that he is Neidhart himself
Who disgraces us all the time.

Wagendrüssl speaks:

The disgrace be yours too.
You were the one who led us here.

Ackertrapp speaks:

Well, let's go. We will all strike
Even if we get caught.

The peasants strike one another. The first knight Gäbein goes to the Duke and speaks:

Good sir, the monks are without honor,
They strike one another
And they disturb the land with great conflict.
Do you allow me to drive them out?

The Duke speaks to Gäbein:

Yes, go tell them they are free.
Everyone go from where he came.

The knight Gabein goes and speaks to the peasants:

Dear children, you must follow me.
Your fathers cows stand yet unmilked.
Go home, you without grace!
Or I'll strike you with a club!

The peasants run out of the cloister to their place. Milchfridl speaks:

From where did you gentlemen come?
Have you been playing with the ball?

Schlickenbrein speaks:

No, my dear cousin.
438 Truly, Neidhart shall be unhappy.
He is completely a bad rascal.
He made us all monks
And he was one too.
In this way this happened to us.

Eisengrein speaks:

If he was a monk,
He made us all fools.
We can't protect ourselves.
He is truly a devilish man,
Now we should see
If we can outsmart him
So we can take his life.
Then we can jump with joy.

Lucifer calls all his companions out of hell and speaks:

Come, come, come!
All my companions I call.

The other devils run out of hell. Sathanas speaks:

Master, what do you want now?
Tell us, we are ready to do it.

Lucifer speaks:

Silence and heed my words!
They are spoken for your benefit;
And heed this well!
They are spoken of a devilish family.
Poldrius, Paldrius, Poldrianus.
These are strong devil words.
Which you have seldom heard.
I will tell you where they come from.
The wise King Solomon
Put them in a glass
That was tall and wide.
There they remained laying within
Until I almost gave them up.
439 When these words were spoken
The glass and they broke apart
And have since conceived such craft
That many souls were brought to hell.
With these same words praise me!
Since I'm
Your king and lord,
Honor me as is meet and right.

The devils sing in chorus the song:

Lucifer, our lord
We shall honor you,
Poldrius, Paldrius, Poldrianus.

Lucifer speaks:

That was a good song
You were bidden sing.
Sing it to me once more.
I deserve it.

They sing again.

Lucifer!

Lucifer preaches a sermon:

Now silence: I will let you know
Why I brought you here.
A new disgrace
Has happened in the land.
We will make good use of it.
It is newly come,
As I now tell you,
The peasants don't want to bear the fact
That the knights and their children
Are differently clothed than they.
They diminish
The nobles stature every day.
The peasants rise
And the knighthood falls
Just as you have just been told.
Heretofore a few short years
No peasant was so rich.
They all had
To wear rough cloaks.
How that was I will tell you.
They were lined with flax.
They also wore, I did not invent this,
Few do that now.
A rough cowl and worthless hat
And a burlap jumper
And a coat of linen.
He was a rich man
Who could have both.
His shoes were held on with strings.
It was seen to at the same time
That they observed the Wendish custom
Of the hair cut over the ears.
When they went to war
They hung cloaks on their shoulders.
At that time, too,
If they should ride to market,
Their horse was not grand
The saddle was of uncovered wood,
The ring was of burlap,
The girth was of bast,
The stirrup was woven of willow wands
And tied to the saddle with rope.
While they observed these customs,
They had peace in that day.
But now the peasants
Have dressed themselves like knights
With weapons and with an air.
Now it won't be good anymore

Since the peasants and their children
Will wear long hair.
Their cowls are scalloped and long--so long
They wipe their asses with it.
Their jackets are tight,
A yard and a half long,
So when they put one on
They can't even walk.
Their coats are long
And cause them so much trouble
That they can't turn around.
If they should need to,
In faith before they could get a hand free
The enemy would all have left
So not a one remained.
Their shoes are cut
From wood in the courtly fashion
So the hose shine out.
Over them they place their spurs.
They go about a-jingling,
Singing dirty songs:
Thus they please Fridrauna.
But from this day,
On the earth,
There shall be no proper peace
Between the peasants and the knights.
With manly craft a knight
Has pursued the war
And brought much sorrow to them.
They say: I never thought
He would make a full thirty-two cripples.
Let him think what he may
About their fighting among themselves
And murdering like dogs.
Their souls for us will be
A pretty number.
I bid you,
And promise you thereby
By the love for you,
Go among them and mingle!
You should get the peasants
So they can't harm anyone,
Then many will be stricken down.
There is no question about it.
Their souls will all be mine.
Now be ready!
Who brings his love
And can give it full
Shall have the tenth soul.

Sathanas speaks:

Master, I will ever be
Your friend Sathanas.
You know well of my slyness
And of the work I will do for you
And have done now for you.
Thus I made
The first anger and envy
That lies between the peasants and knights,
The one when Neidhart found the violet.
I made him shamed
By a rude wild villager.
I let him know, as I can,
Where the violet stood.
This started the envy
So the peasants were injured.
And to Sir Neidhart
Came his friends and companions to help.
They helped him bring them low.
The peasants were a large number.
Then they struck off
Their left legs
Which I gathered up.
I tell you in truth this happened.
I'll show you them if you want to see.

Lucifer speaks to Sathanas:

Gather them up and carry them to Hell
443 And tell our companions
They should guard them well
Or I'll strike them about the shoulders.
Now their feet are ours.
I hope all of their souls will be mine.

Lasterpalch speaks:

Yes, Lucifer, it will be done,
I will go to them now.
I will give them such advice
That they will care
Little for body or life.
I will also teach
Them arrogance and exuberance,
Greediness and foreign custom,
Play, seduction, and drunkeness
And false oaths.

Lead them to lasciviousness and murder,
Betrayal and bad words,
Lying, deceiving and homicide,
The child to make its father angry,
Back talk and meddling;
All manner of wickedness I'll hang on them,
All I can conceive,
And I will make sorrow and strife
By day and night,
Morn and evening.
No peace will they have,
Rather murder and blows.

Lucifer speaks:

Thank you, dear boy.
If you do that, you do right.
I will always thank you
And never forsake you.
I will reward you greatly.
Swiftly I will crown you.
Sit 'twixt me,
I will reward you.

Lasterpalch:

Oh what a great promise is that.
I can always be thankful for it.
Now it must go rightly
As I've told you.

Lucifer speaks to the other devils:

You other devils; as you are,
Whoever has the best craft,
Him I will especially reward.
You have my promise.
You shall have leave of me now.
Everyone, as best he can,
Should fill my needs,
So Hell will be filled with souls.
Apply yourselves vigorously.
Run quick and do not tarry longer.

The devils run among the peasants and make war and discord.
The prologue of the play speaks:

Listen, I will enlighten you.
Englmair with his friends
Will come to Zeislmaur again.

He brings with him, as I have it,
Sir Neidhart and his friends.
Neidhart will be secretly carried
In a cask by the wine.
He shall make great sorrow and distress
For the peasants
As they did to him with the violet.
It will cause him great pain.
He will be pressed close by the wine
So Englmair won't become aware of him.
Englmair brings with him a great host,
One hundred maids or more.
Fridrauna will join
With Englmair.
Neidhart has found out
That the peasants number more than forty,
And the peasants come with craft
To capture Neidhart.
They are very anxious for this.
Two of the peasants' confidants
Come here with song.
They both come in the same mode of dress,
Each has a garland
In which are flowers gold, red, and brown.
They don't want anyone telling stories.
Who brings his chatter with him,
They discover by his very deed.
He will lose his life immediately,
They have sworn an oath to this.
Englmair has a cousin
Who gives good advice.
He is called Regenbart
And is well known in Bravant,
In the land, as a thorny man.
He will dance with them at the place.
He also has many companions;
He will take them with him.
They are coming here with shouts
I will name them for you:
Walkentritt and Scheuhenpflueg,
Renpart and Polsterprouch,
Ackerkitz and Pfutzner,
Irrenfrid and Lungentriefer,
Gleiselbrecht and Milchfridl,
Schottenschlicker and Hellrigel,
Erkenwolt and Willenbolt,
Gumprecht and Gumpolt,
Pestelman and Schnabelrausz,
Hainkam and Pagkenpaus,
Nagenranft and Ackertrapp,
Relling and Maulaff,

Polsterpuob and Schlickenprein,
They shall be the foresingers.
Egkereich shall have a lyre,
Schurzenesl shall beat the drum,
Götz and Panz,
Shall do the dance.
Fridrauna shall have her promenade
With her maidens and dance
In the village manner.
Whoever will join the dancers now,
Come together here.

Then the peasants dance with the serving girls. They have knives at their sides. Schottenschlicker speaks:

You wild ones who are watching us,
Leave off your chatter
And let us give our leaps full sway.
Whoever cares to remain at ease
And escape a fresh wound
Will leave us in merriment,
Or we will strike him a deep wound
Which never will be knit.
We will crease his flesh
So that one might drive a plough through
And never close the furrow.
Such are the blows I can strike.

Scheuhenpfluog speaks:

Now take a look at this sword.
With it I'll have it known
That I suffer no man.
I will hew him through the collar.
Lungs, and liver I can split
So they never join again.
Steel and iron were never so hard
That I could not cut through brain and beard
And make deep wounds in his bones.
I can do this all alone.
When I set myself to fight
A whole land cannot resist me.
I say in truth,
All those who are prepared
And wear a sword
Are insufficient against us.
Be they many or few
I consider them no more than a feather wedge.

Englmair speaks to his companions:

You gentlemen heed my words!
I would make you free of further disgrace
From Sir Neidhart
So he can't weaken,
Bind or capture us
As he often has.
He has overreached himself here.
Should he be as furious as a bear,
Stronger than life itself
And wiser than the wild boar,
Or crafty as a fox,
He can never escape us.
If he comes within our sight
We will take his life from him.
You gentlemen, if you will have it so,
Raise your hands and say "yes."
Do this for my sake
If you would be his enemy.

The peasants answer:

Yes! Yes!

Englmair speaks to his companions:

True companions, thank you!
Now don't tarry. It is becoming late.
If we do it right it will be done.
448 You know well what we have conceived.
Each think what you can
And spiritedly begin it,
So Fridrauna will think ill of no one
And the maidens will not be hateful
And therefore take the dance from us.
We would always be disgraced.

Regenbart speaks:

Englmair, don't be sad!
My companions have composed
A handsome proud step
Which is in the new courtly manner.
They do the step up on their toes
So their heels don't touch.
Their spurs jingle.
They sing the song.
They make many a heart happy.
They step high and they step low.
I know well no knight can

Do the new dance we have.
Therefore, one knows for sure
We want hair and dresses
To bounce and flounce
And we will dance with joy.

Englmair speaks:

No knight was ever like this.
Thank you, cousin Regenbart.
Let your dance be shown.
Look, here come the women!
Eckereich, the lyre player.
Fridrauna, too,
Clothed in a wonderful dress.
She carries a pretty mirror
Which must be mine today.
There can be no question about it.
Even if some one should strike me dead,
449 I must have that mirror.
Do the dance to your content,
Here comes Fridrauna!

Fridrauna with her maidens dance there. Then the peasants start to dance. The Innkeeper brings a cask of wine. And after the dance, the Innkeeper's boy hawks the wine and says:

My master has made a fine wine,
All should have some.
It's thick and bitter.
Beware, you counts and knights,
You nobles and peasants.
If you drink much of it, it will make you sour.
It is dregs and it is impure,
It is what my master has in his cask.

Englmair speaks:

I think without a doubt
We must taste this wine
Which this stranger has brought.

Regenbart fills the rhyme and says:

You have considered well.
If Fridrauna would go with us there, it
Would be an honor and quite a thing.
I want to know that for certain.
Let us go and ask her to go with us.

Englmair, Uel Hausknecht and Regenbart go to Fridrauna.
Englmair speaks:

Oh Fridrauna, could it be
That you and your maidens
Would go for wine with us?
We will stand your debt
So you will speak ill of no one.
Your money will not be taken.
We'll pay for all of you
And I'll pay for you, Fridrauna.

Fridrauna says:

I thank you kindly for that
Which you have offered.
You needn't stay here longer
I will not go to the wine.
I am not prepared,
Also it is not my convenience.
I care nothing for your money.
I came here for the dance's sake.
I have much in my own right.
If I drink, I'll pay for it myself.

Englmair speaks:

Since you don't care for it,
And our money is not needed by you,
We will pour
A measure or two ourselves.
Go, Uel Hausknecht, and bring the wine.
We will, in the meantime, be by them. [The girls]

Uel Hausknecht brings the wine and says:

God bless the wine
Englmair and his companions
Hereby give you maidens.
They request the pleasure
That you don't turn it down.
Drink hearty, they will pay to your satisfaction.

After the drink, Englmair says:

Fridrauna, dear friend of mine,
If you would care to be so kind
As to give me the mirror!
Should God grant me life
I will serve you always,
So I would pay you fully.

451 Fridrauna speaks:

You're right about the custom,
One which the peasants observe.
If someone does something really good,
They don't let it go unnoticed.
You want to have your dance esteemed
As I understand it.
The mirror is mine, let that be known.
There is none among you
Who can possess it
Unless I give it to him.
I would begrudge him his possession
Unless he come by it in a nice way.
I've considered in my heart,
Who does tonight the best
With grace and singing,
With dancing and leaping,
Shall get the mirror
And dear little garland of mine.

Regenbart goes to his companions and says:

You gentlemen, step over here,
And hear the news.
Fridrauna thanks you kindly
For the wine you gave.
She brings a mirror and a garland.
If you all come to the dance,
To the one who does best
(this advice all need well),[1]
I mean with handsome singing
And with dancing and with springing
And other handsome deeds
In the new fashion,
She will give the mirror and wreath.
Be happy in the dance
And make Fridrauna endeared to you,
If you would have the gift,
And thus we will achieve honor.

452 I will return to Englmair.

He goes there. Götz speaks:

Gentlemen, who thinks
What Englmair is doing is right?
He gives our wine to the women
And thereby wants to be the best.

---

[1] sic

He endears himself to Fridrauna
With laughter and chatter
So none of us can get the mirror.
I know well he wants it himself.

Schottenschlicker speaks:

Do I hear now you're talking?
We should be happy
We have someone
Who can get along with Fridrauna.
We should not begrudge him
Because he gave her our wine.

Raunz speaks:

Listen, it doesn't mean anything to you.
You talk like a plough boy.[1]
If you go home tonight your wife
Will drive you out again.
I swear in truth, as I should,
That I am full of anger.
Englmair gets the mirror
I'll catch him by the hair
And cut off his head
And scalp his golden hair.
He may rather wish he did not get the gift.
That I'll swear in truth.

Rotzkatter speaks:

Truthfully, friend, you say rightly.
Here are so many good boys
Who paid for the wine.
453 Should the use and honor there from
Be Englmair's alone?
Who thinks it is good.
I never said so.
I will not suffer him
Because he wants to have it better in all ways.
Whether we have little or much,
He wants to push us around.
How long shall we stand it?

Wagendrüssl speaks:

In truth this is bad
That he joined
With Fridrauna.

---

[1] Du redest, als du gepachen hast.

I must think of the time
He wretchedly deserted us
And cowardly walked away from us
And went under Fridrauna's coat,
When our left legs were taken.
Then he also joined with Fridrauna.
I'll never again allow it.
I'll tend to his disgrace
So his leg will be crooked,
And he must be like us
For all of his airs.

Milchfridl speaks:

Truly you have thought well.
Let us do it to its consummate end!
We will not kill him,
Rather we will bring him to grief.
I will help the best I can.
I will not give this up for anyone's sake.
I say this in truth,
I will be the first to start
To bring him to grief,
454 Whether it cost little or much.

Wisel speaks:

I think you can't be silent.
I know why you devise such plans.
We come here for the sake of dancing.
The war had robbed us of our happiness.
Therefore let your war be
And pay the innkeeper for the wine
And let us start our dance again.
During the time we have the dancers here
We could be entirely successful with Fridrauna.
Come, I will sing one for us,
The best song I can sing
The one I have newly learned.

And he sings what he wants to. Englmair speaks:

God bless you, Fridrauna.
Honor my service and think of me
And let the mirror be mine.
So I shall ever thank you
While I live on earth.
Let Regenbart have the garland,
My cousin who stands beside you,
And he shall never let you go unthanked.

Fridrauna speaks:

Englmair, you know well
That I shall give this to no one
Other than one who is a great hero at leaping,
And an angel at dancing,[1]
And who appeals to my heart completely.
So let your begging be!

Englmair speaks:

I have lost it.
May God look after us.
Our companions want to do the dance.
Wish me luck. I must leave.

And they get set to dance. Englmair speaks to the innkeeper:

Innkeeper, let us try the wine.
None of us shall go from here
And let you lack payment for the wine.
You shall have no sorrow from us.

The Innkeeper answers him and speaks:

I know you well enough.
You won't be indebted to me.
Were it a thousand times as much,
I would never believe you.

Fridrauna Balbera, the other maiden, speaks:

Come you maidens and be ready
To be both early and late.
We must be at this dance.
Do this for me
So you shall have a good air.
Eckereich, start with the lyre!
And court one another.

Then they dance, Englmair and his peasants on one side and
Fridrauna with her maidens on the other. Englmair pulls the mirror from Fridrauna's hand and Fridrauna goes from the dance with her maidens. Saurkubl speaks:

---

[1]Und an tanzen auserwelt.

Indeed, Englmair, this is too much.
This can mean some hard play for you.
Who shall think it good
That you so rudely behave
And take the mirror by force?
What right do you assume now so quickly
Over Fridrauna who is my girlfriend.
Englmair, you should know
That I won't stand for it.
You must tell me the truth and
Pay me back completely,
Or I will give you a knife thrust.

Geirschnabel speaks:

Englmair, you rude man,
You have rudely acted
To pull the mirror from Fridrauna
And break the tie on which it hung.
Oh, that you never stood by her
And caused us such disgrace.
If you would care to injure me
You can reflect evilly on good friends.
You must always regret it.[1]

Englmair speaks:

I have the mirror in my hand
And I know what I have done.
Whoever would follow my example
Will renew his disgrace.
I will make the mirror unusable.
You may be angry or you may laugh.
It's all the same to me.
Come on! Whoever cares to come!

And he throws the mirror on the ground and pulls his knife from leather. Scheuhenpflueg speaks:

Wait, what has he done to us?
He broke the mirror!
We honored him so long.

---

[1]Seint ain mal dass ir nit nach ir stelt
Und alles auf unser laster get.
Wolt ir mich nit an schaden halten
Ir mocht wol guot freunt scheltenck
Un dass stat machet neu,
Es muess euch wÄrlich alzeit gereuen.

He swore he was our lord.
Tried companions now draw your swords,
The dance is now a free for all!

They pull their swords and knives from leather and strike
one another and strike off one of Englmair's legs and stop
fighting. Erkenwolt speaks:

What are you going to that man
457 Who never did you any harm?
Turn your weapons to the fight
Against Neidhart, who lies in the cask
And let Englmair recover.
I think nothing could be better.

Pestelman speaks:

Is this true Erkenwolt?

Erkenwolt fills the rhyme:

If it isn't true then you should never trust me.
He is lying in a cask by the wine.

Pestelman fills the rhyme:

So go then my companions.
We will be there quickly
As quickly as we take his life,
So he shall be ours.

And the peasants run to the cask. Neidhart speaks to his squire:

Quick and bring us the horses.
The peasants have pulled their swords
And all are running here.
I think they have me in mind.

Gumprecht speaks:

Truly you have no done right
To strike your chief
Who always gave you good advice
And was in all ways in the best status.
If Englmair were in sight
Sir Neidhart would not have recovered.
He moved so quickly
And fought too spiritedly

To have me do him such a truly evil deed;
To have us take his life.
Now put up your swords you heroes,
We shall not be fighting anymore.
458 Grant that he will be whole again,
The one we have stricken to death.

Fridrauna speaks:

Oh why have I come here,
Now that Englmair is taken.
I think he has lost his life,
Him, whom I chose as my beloved.
If he had only caused you pain!
Since this dance was ever thought of
It has brought me great pain.

Himlgart the third maiden speaks:

Fridrauna, my dear companion,
Englmair your beloved
Will not die.[1]
He is straightening and speaking.
I can say this in truth
As I saw it myself.

Fridrauna answers her:

Oh God will that it is so.
Then my heart would remain happy.
Otherwise I could never again conceive happiness.
My heart would need remain in pain.

The other servant Gesli speaks:

Believe me Fridrauna,
As little happened to him as you.
If he has in his left leg
A wound, it is little.
It will not kill him.
Therefore leave off your sorrow.

Maulaff speaks:

Truly it makes me sick with pain.
We will stand here no longer.
I am angry and discomforted

---

[1]Wirt am leben nicht.

That Englmair has lost
His left foot.
I must always regret that.
Help me carry him from there,
I want to get him a doctor
So he'll be well again.
I'll help him the best I can.

Schurzenesl speaks:

Truly his discomfort makes me sad.
I say this on my word of honor.

They carry Englmair there. Neidhart comes riding to meet them and speaks:

So my dear man, who did this?
How great a wound a blow can make!
It can split people's
Feet from their ankles,
I understand that well.
Say, my good man, who is the wounded man
Who has been led into such evil straits
And how did it happen to him?

Milchfridl speaks:

I will truly tell you.
We called this dance of praise
Thirteen days ago.
It's said there came
To us a Sir Neidhart
Who vexed us severely,
And made cripples of us.
Today he conceived
A truly unusual slyness.
I will tell you what that is.
He had himself packed in a cask
In which there was wine.
He lay there covertly
And saw all our drunkeness,
Hoping thereby to injure us
Conceive him sorrows.
It is a dishonor and a
Great pain in our hearts.

Neidhart speaks:

Ai, my dear man, go on.
With that consul came
He that you did not hew him through
If he was in the cask.

Schnabelrausz speaks:

Truly he lay so still
That we walked
About the cask and about the wine,
And yet we could neither see nor hear him.
There was a cry on the road.
All of a sudden he rose out of the cask
And slyly left here.
Had we caught him
He would have never recovered
Even if he were a gymnast!

Neidhart speaks:

What would you give someone
Who sent him to you
And joined you
So you might have your way with him!

Schottenschlicker speaks:

Ah, Lord God, if it might be
That he would lie again by the wine
As he did today,
No day could be so dear to me.
We will give as reward to him
Who brings him to rights
461 The best horse
Anywhere in the land
That any man would pay for;
Whether it costs little or much.
We would be revenged, if you please,
So we want to have our way with him.

Neidhart speaks:

Now heed my best advice:
I hate him too.
What you do to him does not pain me.
My father left me great holdings
Which the Duke had fiefed to him,
I am not yet resigned to this.
It seems to me to be advisable
Not to openly hunt him.
Rather construct some secret sorrow for him.
I say this on my word of honor.
Mark me well!
If I brought him here
Like that post before you,
So that I could do him some great sorrow,

How would that strike you?
If you would fell him,
Let me test you first,
So that my work be not for nothing.

Scheuhenpfluog speaks:

You shall soon see it.
We will hew him so thoroughly,
Head, arm, ribs, and body,
That one piece won't remain by another.
Tried heroes and brave warriors,
Pull your sharp blades
And let this gentleman see
What shall happen to Neidhart.
Then he can clearly see
That we are in earnest.

462 And they pull their weapons from leather and strike against the post. Neidhart speaks:

You gentlemen put your swords back now!
I see well you will be in earnest.
Would you promise me at this place,
As you said before,
That you will give a charger
Or else a reward of.
Should it be a hundred marks?
Promise me, too, that you will not allow
Him to recover.
When I brought him here.
So I shall at this moment
Ride to where the Duke is.
I'll take my friends with me.
I'll goodly beg the Duke
To enfief me with his holdings.
I know in truth that he will gladly do this,
The Duke doesn't care for him either.
Now you want him dead.
If it comes to pass he gives me his holdings,
I would be a rich man.
I promise you, that is certain, that
He will be back in the cask tomorrow.
Therefore, be by the wine
And put him in such a great pain
As you can conceive.
Give me the horse or the reward.

Scheuhenpfluog speaks:

All that he wants,
Be great or small

We should give it to him.
Now all come nearby!
So Neidhart shall come here, to our joy,
Tomorrow in a cask.
Both young and old,
If we promise something, we will keep it.

Neidhart speaks:

As dear as truth is you
Promise my companions, too.

Scheuhenpfluog speaks:

We promise happily whom ever you name
It shall be done by morning.

Seventh knight speaks:

Gentlemen, promise us in this way too:
Raise your hands and say "Yes."

And the peasants raise their hands and speak:

Yes! Yes!

Neidhart speaks:

Gentlemen, I want your leave.
To leave the arrangements
Until tomorrow.
So each of you think of what he can
So he does the best.
God be with you. I will leave you.
Serve the Duke!
Now God bless you!

The peasants start again to dance, and Neidhart with his knights ride to the court. The Duke speaks to Neidhart:

Neidhart, my dear friend,
You must come to me.
If you know something new, tell me!
How stands it between the peasants and you?

Neidhart speaks:

Good Sir, I will tell you truly.
I lay upon a wine wagon
By the wine in a cask

So I could find out better
What they wanted to do.
There was a second in there.
I don't know who it was.
They went with drawn swords to the house,
As if the devil were after them.
Sir, if I were a mouse
It would have been to my advantage.
I came craftily from it
So they would not see me.
My squire came to help me
With the horses. Then I rose up.
They were hewing one another
And had wounded their chief;
Struck off his left leg.
Then they enveighed against me quite unhappily.
First they all began to threaten me.

The Duke speaks to Neidhart:

Come here and sit, Neidhart.
As your lady and I
Wished we had been there
I say this in all truth,
Could I secretly come there
So they won't know of my observation?
And should they show their manners,
It would make me happy for a year.

The Eighth knight speaks:

Well, Sir, don't go there!
I say this in all truth
That you are seeing now
What airs they have.
And they threaten to do them to Neidhart.
They want to prepare him like a chicken.
They spoke in truth!
If he comes again as he had come to them before
To the dance at Zeislmaur,
They would leave little of him.

The Duke speaks to the knights:

Did he not come near them
So to let himself converse with them?

The Ninth knight speaks:

If no one named him,
They wouldn't know him.

He closed an eye,
As he has many tricks,
So they could not recognize him.
Then they began to speak with him.
They promised to give him a hundred marks
Or a charger or other horse
Worthy of this money,
If he would bring Neidhart to rights.
He promised in turn
That he would send
Sir Neidhart to Zeislmaur.
Then all the peasants shouted[1]
That he would pull himself into a cask
As he did tonight.
There they wanted to strike him so he would never
Come out living.

The Duchess speaks to Neidhart:

Now don't let yourself be too quick!
If they come so near
You that they can recognize you,
Then they may take your life from you.

The first knight speaks:

I will tell you, lady, what was done this evening.
Sir Neidhart just spoke there.
A post was to play his part
And lie by the wine
And he was supposed to have brought him there.
He dared them to strike it
At a moment they were ready
To fight, each one,
Their swords drawn in contention,
They hew the post to little pieces.
When I observed this
It frightened me sore indeed
And I was so choked up
I had rather been in the tenth land.

Duke speaks:

This is quite bad for you, Neidhart.
If they come across you on some trip
I know well they won't let this drop.
They will strike you dead!

---

[1]Do Schriren alle die pauren.

Neidhart speaks:

Really, Sir, I'm not in danger
If I only notice them in time
So that I can get on my horse
They will neither injure nor use me.

The Duke speaks to Neidhart:

I shall give you support.
I know well, that in my memory
There is no faster horse.
Should you have the misfortune
To have your horse wounded,
This horse will save your health.

The Duchess speaks:

Neidhart, be without sadness.
I will not allow you to go unrewarded.
I promise you four long cloths from Ghent.
All those present here,
Together must say
That they have never seen better cloths.

467 Neidhart speaks to the Duchess:

Lady, I thank you for your noble deeds,
Which you have shown me often
And done many-a-day.
Since I don't really serve
Nor honor you enough
This is really much more than good of you.

The Duke speaks to Neidhart:

Neidhart you serve us well
When you observe the peasants customs.
Thereby you bestow your thanks,
And that is thanks enough for us.
You should think nothing of it.
Bring drink! We want to have our cheer.

Drinks are brought and with this the play ends.

APPENDIX C

The Lesser Neidhart Play

The Lesser Neidhart Play is found in the same manuscript as the Greater Neidhart Play. It appears as number twenty-one in Keller's Fastnachtspiele, XXX, 191-198.

The Play

191 THE NEIDHART PLAY

Now listen all you gentlemen.
Here comes Neidhart the mighty knight.
He will do a play for us.
If it concerns anyone,
Close your pockets and your purses
So no one grabs inside.
There is a crew of wanderers going about.[1]
Those who don't leave off their jeering
Will soon be so stricken by us
One will have to carry him away.
Now who likes our diversion
And gives us a gift
We will all join in its consumption
And thank him kindly too!

A Knight speaks:

I am a knight from Milan.
A Duchess sent me here.
In courtliness we are to come together,
All war is outlawed here.

The Duchess speaks:

Sir Neidhart, my dear servant,
When will you bring the fine violet?
If you know of it, tell me instantly.

---

[1]Doch get daher ein erbergs geslecht.

192 Neidhart speaks to the Duchess and secretly puts the violet down, covering it with his hat.

Good lady of Austria
Give me your hand quite virtuously:
I will lead you to a meadow green
And show you this pretty violet.
I hope it brings you joy and cheer.
I have covered it with my hat.
We would like to dance the round about it,
With your maidens in the month of May

Adelhart speaks to her husband:

Englemair, my dear husband,
Let us about this fine violet
Dance. I think it meet and right.
I will give you ginger bread.

Englemair speaks:

Start the music, my dear player.
I will dance the best I can,
I and my clod companions.
Let us get this violet:
If you do a good job,
I will give an egg as reward:

Neidhart speaks to the Duchess:

Gracious lady delicate,
Now go this way with me.
So I shall show you the fine violet
Which should be yours alone.

The first maiden goes with Neidhart

Maiden, you must look at the violet.
I covered it away from this peasant with my hat
Since I didn't trust him.
Look, delicate maiden, how stands it?

193 The maiden speaks:

Delicate most dear lady of mine,
This violet does not seem right to me.
Say, Neidhart, what has happened to you?
Have you mistaken a turd for a violet?

The second maiden speaks:

By your leave madam, you should know,
The peasants have crapped on the violet.
We will damn them roundly.
We will look for it in the crap.

The third maiden:

Lady, let us push the crap away,
And search the gravel with our hands,
And if we find it, then we can say
That Neidhart did see the violet,
That we believe him all the more,
And that the peasants hate him.

The Duchess speaks:

Neidhart you must leave the country,
Otherwise you must be jeered and shamed:

Neidhart speaks to the Duchess:

Sweet noble lady of Austria,
I bewail to you quite sadly
About the rude peasant,
And the others, who have done this disgrace to me.
My dear lord must also know this.
It was they who crapped on the violet.
Before I would forgive them this disgrace
I would sooner kill ten of them.

Englemair, on stilts, speaks:

I'm called Englemair, listen to me;
I'm coming on my stilts.
Sir Neidhart, I have a boy
194 Whose name is Eltschenprecht.
If he doesn't play another trick on you
I'll be greatly saddened.

Eltschenprecht speaks:

Well, I'm Eltschenprecht,
And I'm a freeman.
Neidhart, you should know
That I crapped on the violet.

Neidhart speaks:

Counts, knights, and squires,
We must fight with the peasants.

Challenge them, prepare to fight
With them because of their wickedness and their envy.

A knight speaks:

I am called the knight from Satelpogen.
Look, Eltschenprecht, you are deceived.
I will hit you on the head
So you run about like a topless pot.

A peasant speaks:

I'm a peasant from Dingelfingen.
Friends let us join together.
I have a braided forelock
With rings of armour meshed
And a sword that cost me two pounds.
With it I will wound Neidhart.
Neidhart, mark that well.
I will fix you with my sword.

A knight speaks:

I am a knight from the Rhine.
Freely I will serve you.
I will enjoy fighting with peasants,
I have always been their enemy,
We'll take their cows and goats
And we will put them in the stocks.
If they come to this place,
I will stand the peasants alone.

A peasant speaks:

I am a real hero,
In the kitchen,
Where pretty women work,
There I hold my own.
If someone pulls a sharp sword
He'll find me first to flee.

A knight speaks:

I am a young strong knight.
I am so filled with gall,
To fight with them is my fancy.
I'll strike the four rude peasants
At both their heels and heads
So they lie before me like split logs.

A peasant speaks:

A am a proud young peasant
And I am sick of Neidhart.
Knight, what will you think of your skill
If I stand you all alone.
I won't suffer this anymore.
I'll hew you through your pauldron.

A knight speaks:

I am a knight from Hirschorn.
The peasants make my angry.
They must pay a heavy forfeit;
The right foot and the left hand
I will not miss a one.
I'll cut their peters from their butts.

196 A peasant speaks:

I am an undaunted peasant.
I don't care for Neidhart either.
Once at a fair
You sold us a salve
Which made our bellies swell.
That's why we all hate you.
That's why I will repeat
I'm going to hit you very hard.

Neidhart's squire speaks:

Sir Neidhart, take to hand
Your sword. I think this is no jest.
The peasants are feeling their beers
And might knock our hides off.
Put on your helmet of steel.
My good sir, I think that would be good.

Neidhart speaks:

Now come you knights and squires,
And pay the peasants for their rashness.
I admonish you at this time
To come do battle.
Everyone put on your helmet,
So I can stand before their exuberance,
And come here to this place
So we can stand the peasants.

A knight says:

I am a young tender knight.
Neidhart, I tell you at this time,
If it were all as you servants would have it,
We would go with you until death
And joyfully join with you.
I hope we will be successful.

Hebenstreit speaks:

Listen, I am Hebenstreit.
Neidhart, defend yourself. Now is the time.

Now they strike one another. The Devil speaks.

I am the evil devil and I
Torture hard and take the souls
Who fall here and are killed.
Them I drag to hell
And bring them before Lucifer.
The peasants' souls are not unwelcome.

A peasant speaks:

Fight ho! Fight on!
I have slept so long today
My brother has been killed.
I wail to Christ in heaven.
Neidhart, I will not rebuke you,
But pay you up in full.

Another peasant speaks:

Friend Knopf, calm yourself.
I know a doctor
Who always heals our wounds.
The doctor's name is Laurein.

Laurein speaks:

I, Laurein, have a good potion.
The peasant who is wounded and sick
Will be better if he drinks from this vial.
In truth I say this.

Hebenstreit speaks:

Laurein, you have helped me well.
I shall always thank you.

A knight speaks:

Come, Neidhart, it is time,
Since we have won the victory
The Duchess will give us as reward
Eat and drink and a happy life,
Because we have brought the peasants to shame.
Now give the Duchess your hand!

Reveler:

Prosper, and God spare your health
Until a penny is worth a hundred pounds.
Let God grant you a happy life
Until we give your gifts back.
Good night! You'd like to sit longer
Though the fast will be all the harder
After Shrovetide has come to you.
So one should read of the Passion:
So we lay our sins aside.
God willing, we'll be here next year.

APPENDIX D

The Sterzing Scenerio

The source of the Sterzing Scenerio is a manuscript found in the Sterzing archives. It was edited and conjoined with some twenty-five other plays from various manuscripts by Oswald Zingerle and published as number twenty-six in Sterzinger Spiele in Wiener Neudrucke, XI (Vienna, 1886), 236-263.

236 Directions for the Neydthart Play, etc.

Item: When the procession is to enter into the barriers, the pipers should lead. Someone ought to go with them to make way through the crowd in order that there be sufficient room. Thereafter comes the Prologue in the lead and two knights immediately preceding the Duchess who is accompanied by a chamberlain. Thereafter comes Neydthart with his knights, companions, and maidens. Finally, Ennglmayer and Ellschnprecht and their neighbors, wives, and maids come in.

When all have come before the barriers as far as a few steps, all should stand still in the procession order.

237 The Prologue (solo) should cross to the middle of the barriers and say:

Hear this, you Ladies and Gentlemen,
Both Noble and Common, who have come to this place!
You shall see a most unusual adventure,
I solemnly assure you.
I beg you kindly not to be distressed
Perchance someone stammers
Because he doesn't know his lines.
They can't all read
Because they have never been to school.

After this speech comes another prologue.

See here, Ladies and Gentlemen.
What an excellent adventure will be shown
You here. It comes . . . etc.

Then the cast goes in procession about the barriers. There should be chairs and benches set up. The Duchess sits with her entourage at the highest place.

On one side, at some distance, are Neydthart, his knights and servants.

In another place, opposite and lower, are Ennglmayer and his company with their wives and maids. The piper pipes up.

Then the Duchess, with her maidens, rises and speaks to Neydthart and his knights who also rise.

238 You Lords, Knights, and Squires,
Listen, and mark me well.
Today we shall here . . . etc.

Thereafter the Duchess and her maidens sit again. Neydthart, standing with his company, crosses (solo) to the Duchess, bows respectfully and says:

Noble princess with out peer,
I should like it to be known without a doubt . . . etc.

Then the Duchess replies to Neydthart:

Approach you knight so bold and virtuous.
I grant you the honor.
It does us . . . etc.

Then Neydthart bows before the Duchess, she gives him her hand. Thereafter, he goes back to his knights and says:

Neydthart is my name.
I am newly come into this quest.
Before this time I have . . . etc.

Then Neydthart and his company go about the ring of the barriers searching for the violet.

He finds it at last in the middle of the place. He removes his hat and says to the little flower:

239 How welcome you are little flower.
Since you cause my heart such joy,
To you all . . . etc.

Then Neydthart, his knights and entourage stand about the violet they love so well and speak to one another about it.

During this the peasants rise unobtrusively and Ennglmayer leads them severally into the barriers to a place where they hold conference. Then Neydthart and his company return to their place and sit. Thereafter the peasants return to their place.

Ebergugl: The peasant Ebergugl stands before Ennglmayer and says:

O, Ennglmayer, you wise man,
Listen to what I saw today.
I came upon . . . etc.

Engglmayer: Enngimayer answers Ebergugl:

O, Ebergugl, my dear neighbor,
That is not good news.
Neydthart is . . . etc.

Ellschnprecht: Then Ellschnprecht stands before his neighbors and says:

240 Ellschnprecht is my name.
And I am the best judge of this suit.
I can shit . . . etc.

Elsamut: Elsamut goes to her husband Ellschnprecht and says:

Alas, my dear Ellschnprecht,
Your judgement was not good.
Beware you . . . etc.

Ellschnprecht: Ellschnprecht replies to his wife:

Well now, get you home, you wretched woman.
I tell you truly, my life as forfeit,
Beware indeed . . . etc.

Then his wife returns to her neighbors and sits again. Ellschnprecht stealthily crosses to the violet. He drops a round from his ordinance upon it [he defecates] and happily returns to his neighbors. His wife meets him on the way and says:

Well Ellschnprecht, my dear husband,
Now tell, what have you done?

Ellschnprecht: He says to her:

Look here, beloved Elsamut,
What a great pain my ass is giving me.
I did . . . etc.

241 Thereafter they go to their place and Ellschnprecht goes to the neighbors and says:

Dear neighbors, I have news for you.
Neydthart is without honor.
Today did he . . . etc.

Ennglmayer: Ennglmayer says to him:

Many thanks to you, good Ellschnprecht.
In all your days you never did as well.
Now he shall . . . etc.

Thereafter the peasants seat themselves again in their places.

Neydthart: Neydthart with his knights and company crosses to the Duchess. He speaks to her:

Oh noble lady of this land,
May great honor and joy be yours
From me and . . . etc.

The Duchess: The Duchess rises and with her entourage places the garland on Neydthart and says:

Neydthart, my dear servant,
I place upon your head the garland
Of great honor and . . . etc.

Neydthart: Now Neydthart order the pipers to lead off. He says to them:

242 Pipe up, you players.
Now is the hour when naught but joy can be!
We shall . . . etc.

So the pipers play and the entire cast in procession order go about the ring in the arena, finally arriving at their stations.

The pipers take their place and play for the dance. Neydthart dances with the Duchess. The knights and maidens do likewise, as do the peasants and their

wives and girls thereafter. When they are in their stations around the violet (the peasants should not take these stations), the peasants go to their place and sit.

The Duchess: The Duchess speaks to Neydthart:

> Neydthart, you worthy man,
> Who at this very place
> Did cover . . . etc.

Neydthart: Neydthart speaks to the Duchess and points to the hat:

> Oh dear lady most delicate,
> Here stands the violet so fine.
> It seems to me . . . etc.

During this, Neydthart takes the Duchess by the hand. The maidens follow. The knights remain still. He

243 leads the lady to the violet. He lifts the hat and lets her look.

The Duchess: She gags and speaks to Neydthart:

> Oh Neydthart, what is this wicked trick?
> Look, what kind of violet is that?
> You have done me . . . etc.

The First Maiden: The First Maiden stands before the Duchess and says:

> Oh dear lady,
> Leave off your anger.
> Neydthart is . . . etc.

The Second Maiden: The Second Maiden stands before the first and says:

> What are you saying about Neydthart?
> Leave off such thoughts now.
> Who did no . . . etc.

Chamberlain: Then the Chamberlain advises the Duchess:

Now my dear lady,
It does not seem to me
That . . . etc.

So they leave and the Duchess and her entourage return to their places.

Neydthart and his company return to their place.

The Third Maiden: The Third Maiden goes to Neydthart and says:

244 Neydthart, quickly leave this land.
Avoid the great dishonor
That you . . . etc.

The maiden returns to her place.

Neydthart: Afterward Neydthart leaves his companions and walks to the middle of the playing area. He cries mournfully:

Oh curse and damn this dishonor.
Never did such happen to anyone
As happened to me today . . . etc.

Then Neydthart, standing still, calls his squire Schlycknwein:

Schlycknwein, where are you?

The squire comes forward and says:

I am here, Sir.

The Neydthart says to him:

Now, go my dear Schlycknwein,
Bring all my good companions
From . . . etc.

Neydthart remains standing in place. Schlycknwein goes to the knights and says:

Mark, good gentlemen all,
How should my message please you!
To me . . . etc.

The Knights: Then the Knights go to Neydthart. The First Knight says to him:

Sir Neydthart, my dear cousin,*
Wherefore you great sorrow?
Does it come . . . etc.

Neydthart says to all:

Oh good knights and friends of mine,
I can never be happy again.
To me . . . etc.

The Second Knight: The Second Knight says to Neydthart:

I tell you good Cousin Neydthart,
We shall all be undone,
Without honor . . . etc.

Neydthart stands with his knights.

Ennglmayer: Then Ennglmayer goes alone to them and says:

I am called Ennglmayer.
My neighbors sent me here
From Zieslmair . . . etc.

Neydthart: Neydthart speaks to Ennglmayer:

So you are called Ennglmayer.
I have met you before.
It did my . . . etc.

Ennglmayer returns to his neighbors.

The Third Knight: The Third Knight says to Neydthart:

My eyes would gladly feast
On the one who did this wrong.
Who he . . . etc.

They remain in place.

---

*Oheim = "Uncle" directly translated.

Ellschnprecht: Then Ellschnprecht goes to them and says:

I am called Ellschnprecht,
And I am the very boy
Who will shit a turd in your mouth.

Ellschnprecht remains by them.

The Fourth Knight: The Fourth Knight comes forward and speaks to Ellschnprecht:

I am a high born knight
And such a rage I have for you
It will . . . etc.

Now everyone returns to their places.

The Master at Arms: Then the Master at Arms comes to the middle of the acting area with his sword and says:

I am a skilled swordsman
Who comes from a foreign land
With my . . . etc.

He displays his sword skills. He remains in the acting area.

Peasant Gumpl: Then the Fourth Peasant, Gumpl, goes into the barriers and says to all:

Neighbor Gumpl is my name
A great rumpus we shall cause
With him . . . etc.

Gumple stands in place next to the Master at Arms and remains still.

247 The Fifth Knight: Then the Fifth Knight comes in and stations himself next to/them/and says:

I am a knight most joyous.
One can hardly find my like
With blows and . . . etc.

The Peasant from Lynden: The Eighth Peasant from Lynden comes in and says to the same knight:

I am Mayr of Lynden
And I can spin the yarn.
Your Nobilities, I . . . etc.

And the peasant also stands in place.

The Sixth Knight: The Sixth Knight enters and says to him:

So you are Mayr of Lynden,
Soon you shall be laid to rest
Since I your . . . etc.

Peasant Eberzanndt: The Seventh Peasant Eberzanndt comes and says to all:

Mayr Eberzanndt is my name.
Of Neydthart I will have revenge.
I have him . . . etc.

The Seventh Knight: The Seventh Knight enters and says to all:

Now shall I never turn from my course.
I shall find Ellschnprecht
Should he to me be . . . etc.

The knight stands with the others in place.

248 The Eighth Peasant of Prunnan comes forth and speaks to his neighbors:

Mayr of Prunnen is my name.
I am entirely of the mind
That we should . . . etc.

The Eighth Knight: The Eighth Knight comes forth and speaks to Mayr of Prunnan:

You are Mayr of Prunnan.
You have hardly any mind.
You are but . . . etc.

Peasant Reyssnzaun: The Ninth Peasant, Reyssnzaun, comes forth and says to the knights who are standing there:

Well, I am a roaring peasant.
You are too bitter for us.
We will . . . etc.

The Ninth Knight: The Ninth Knight comes to Neydthart and leads his a little distance away and says:

Neydthart, give us your advice
Before this business has gone too far.
The wicked peasants . . . etc.

Neydthart: Then Neydthart says to him:

I have good advice I'll give
By which we shall save our lives.
We shall . . . etc.

249 Thereafter, everyone returns to his place. Neydthart calls to his squire Zyppryan and says:

Zyppryan, where are you?

This same squire enters and replies:

Sir, I am here.

Neydthart shows him the notice of challenge in a casket and says:

My good squire Zyppryan,
You know full well how this is done.
Bring this letter to . . . etc.

So the squire takes the letter in the casket to Ennglmayer and says:

Ennglmayer, look.
I bring this letter to you
Sent by . . . etc.

So Ennglmayer takes the letter. During this the messenger remains standing still. Then Ennglmayer shows [the letter] to his neighbors for their advice. They want the messenger to read it.

Ennglmayer: Ennglmayer says to Zyppryan:

Good messenger, we cannot read
As we have never been to school.
Therefore, please . . . etc.

250 Then Zyppryan takes the letter from Ennglmayer and reads aloud to the peasants:

Know this, Ennglmayer, Ellschnprecht, and Guglwein,
And all those who would be your helpers,
Whether old or young . . . etc.

Ennglmayer: The messenger remains in place as Ennglmayer speaks to him:

Ho! Ho! With this news I'm not all displeased
Let them know that we would fight.
You should your . . . etc.

Thereafter the peasants rise willy nilly, cheering.

Zyppryan: Zyppryan returns to Neydthart and says:

Neydthart, my dear sir,
Ennglmayer and his company
Begin to . . . etc.

And then Zyppryan returns to his companions.

Neydthart: And Neydthart speaks to the knights:

Attention you knights and squires.
All stand now at the ready.
We shall . . . etc.

Thereafter, Neydthart, his knights and company

251 stand within the barriers. Then the peasants move in, armed and opposing them.

Mayr of Pewnt: Mayr of Pewnt speaks aloud to his neighbors:

Mayr of Pewnt is my name.
Listen, Ennglmayer and my good friends
Who today . . . etc.

Neydthart: Then Neydthart with his weapon drawn, opposing the peasants, says:

You worthless peasants of such ill-repute,
Let everyone of you beware his life.
And though . . . etc.

Then the drummer sounds the call to battle and Neydthart and his company attack the peasants. All strike one another until Ellschnprecht loses a leg. Ennglmayer and his peasants stand their ground until all are wounded.

Eberzandt: Then Eberzandt should cry aloud to Neydthart and his knights:

Good sir, leave off.
You have won the victory.
Thus you have . . . etc.

252 Then Neydthart with his company should go from the peasants to some other place.

Ellschnprecht's Wife: Then Ellschnprecht's Wife should go to her husband and sorrowfully speaks to him:

Oh, Ellschnprecht, my dear husband,
How often have I told you,
It is this . . . etc.

So then Ellschnprecht should sadly speak to her off to one side and then send her home to her neighbors again. The rest of the peasants should remain together standing or lying in the center of the acting area.

And there should be a table and a bench set up in another part of the barriers. A Doctor comes with many containers and salves which he puts on the table. The Doctor's boy, Allwein, says to him:

Good Master, sit down awhile.
Rest your limbs
And take a . . . etc.

So the Doctor sits at the table.

Then the peasants bring Ellschnprecht in a manure cart.

Ebergugl: Ebergugl stands forth and says to the Doctor:

253 God bless you, Learned Master,
I have heard much of you.
How you . . . etc.

The Doctor: The Doctor speaks to Ebergugl:

I can certainly make him well,
That you must believe without a doubt.
With my . . . etc.

So the Doctor and his boy put Ellschnprecht on stilts. Then the Doctor and his boy should go to another place in the barriers by themselves and remain there, as if they had gone home.

Clara: Then Clara, Ennglmayer's wife, goes to her husband, who is lying sick with his head and hands bound up. She speaks:

Oh woe! Woe today and evermore!
Such an evil deed was done!
Ennglmayer, my . . . etc.

Then the wives of all the men should come to their husbands, wailing and complaining. They remain with them.

Ennglmayer: Ennglmayer stands weakly and says to his wife:

Come, my dear Clara.
I think it's good that you
Came so soon . . . etc.

254 Clara: Then Clara goes to the Doctor, speaks with him, and asks him to come with her to her husband. Then they set out together. She tells her husband that she has brought the Doctor.

Ennglmayer: Ennglmayer speaks to the Doctor thusly:

Dear Master, I wish to say,
I am by battle hard smitten.
Can you know . . . etc.

The Doctor: The Doctor answers Ennglmayer:

Yes I, my dear Ennglmayer,
I can heal you with a fine salve.
Directly I . . . etc.

Ennglmayer: Ennglmayer says in reply:

My dear Master, do this truly
And this you shall not rue.
I will give . . . etc.

So the Doctor and his boy salve Ennglmayer and Ellschnprecht.

The Doctor's Boy: Then the Doctor's boy speaks to Ennglmayer:

Ennglmayer, be assured
This potion shall not injure you
If you . . . etc.

Everyone sits, then everyone stands and the [members of the] entire play return to their former places and sit.

255 Ennglmayer: Ennglmayer calls to his wife and asks:

Wife, where are you?

She stands forth.

Here I am my dear husband.
Now what would you like?

He says to her:

Dear Clara, you should quickly go
And buy us two garlands.
One for me and the other . . . etc.

So, somewhere in the arena is a place where there are garlands sold. Clara goes to buy two of these garlands.

Ellschnprecht: Then Ellschnprecht goes to the Doctor to see about the amount and the fee.

Ennglmayer: Ennglmayer searches for Ellschnprecht. He meets him in the center of the acting area and speaks to him:

God's blessings, dear Ellschnprecht.
This business is gone awry.
So now we . . . etc.

They both go together to their neighbors.

Clara: Then Clara brings the two garlands and says to them:

Look here, dear husband, this is yours.
The other belongs to our Ellschnprecht.
There with . . . etc.

256 Then a Fiddler or a Piper should station himself at that place so they can dance.

Ellschnprecht: Ellschnprecht says to them:

Be joyful, my dear company,
Then shall we do a spirited dance
To make us . . . etc.

The Fiddler or the player starts the dance. And Ellschnprecht leads the dance forth with Clara. Ennglmayer with Elsamut thereafter. Then the peasants and their wives follow in a great round. Thereafter the entire cast sits again in their respective places.

Then Neydthart goes from his company to another place in the barriers. There he stands, as if he did not want them to know where he was.

The Fourth Maiden: Thereafter the Fourth Maiden goes to the knights and says to them:

God's blessings, noble knights so fine.
If you'd care to be of aid
And to my lady go . . . etc.

The First Knight: The First Knight speaks to the maiden:

Thank you, noble maiden so delicate.
Your message we happily hear now.
We would with . . . etc.

257 Then the maiden leads them to the Duchess.

Neydthart remains in his place standing or sitting.

The Second Knight: The Second Knight speaks to the Duchess:

Dear Duchess, so high born,
We plead for your largess.
You should . . . etc.

The Duchess: The Duchess says to him:

Now you gentle knight,
Say to Neydthart in this way:
You have . . . etc.

The Third Knight: The knights go to Neydthart and the Third Knight says to him:

Sir Neydthart, I bring you good news
Which should lighten your heart,
And no longer . . . etc.

Neydthart: Neydthart replies to him:

Oh, dear companions, I say to you
I fear I dare not take a chance.
Directly I shall . . . etc.

The Fourth Knight: Then the Fourth Knight speaks:

Neydthart, you should not despair.
You should boldly act!
You have . . . etc.

258 Neydthart: Neydthart replies to them:

Dear Friends, I would like to believe you,
But I fear this shall cause me rue.
Even so, I shall . . . etc.

Then they all go to the Duchess. Neydthart falls to one knee and says:

Most illustrious princess of such grace.
I humbly pray your indulgence
So you . . . etc.

The Duchess: The Duchess says to him:

Sir Neydthart, we know
That the peasants have great hate for you.
Who you . . . etc.

Neydthart: Neydthart replies:

High born princess so great,
Since your anger at me is passed,
Thank you . . . etc.

Everyone sits. Thereafter everyone in the cast sits in his place as before.

The Second Prologue: The Second Prologue comes before the peasants with Neydthart's son. They rise as he says:

Look, neighbors, I have good news.
Here is Neydthart the Younger.
He would . . . etc.

259 Ennglmayer: Ennglmayer says to Neydthart the Younger:

Tell us, good Younger Neydthart,
What is your attitude toward us.
Would you . . . etc.

Neydthart the Younger: Neydthart the Younger answers him:

Ennglmayer, my good neighbor,
I would befriend you all.
And would . . . etc.

Ennglmayer: Then Ennglmayer says to him:

Now see, let it be so
That your father does not come hereby,
Or he will . . . etc.

Neydthart the Younger:

I tell you upon my oath
My father shall do you no wrong.
I, too, shall heed . . . etc.

Everyone sits. Thereafter everyone returns to their place as before. Then someone comes riding in with a keg to the middle of the barricades. He loudly exclaims while sitting on the keg:

Hear you knights and nobles,
Since you are happily gathered here together,
Also they . . . etc.

260 J#cl Kolwitz: J#cl Kolwitz stands forth and says to the carter:

Many thanks, my good carter,
Never in all your days did you so well.
And had all . . . etc.

Ennglmayer: Then Ennglmayer speaks to his neighbors:

Neighbors Sauffnwein and Eberzandt,
Nicl Mayer's son from Oberlanndt,
Reyssnzawn, Hawenspeck . . . etc.

Then the peasants set up the keg. Tables and benches should be placed near the keg, so that all of the peasants can sit. Then the wine is served from the keg. They drink, shout, indulge in wild living and all manner of grossness.

Neydthart the Elder: And when they have been at this awhile, Neydthart, humbly disguised in a peasant's costume, arrives. No one recognizes him, so he freely speaks to the peasants at the table:

God's blessings, dear neighbors all,
You drink with great spirit.
This business is well conducted . . . etc.

261 Then he cries aloud:

Neydthart forever!

and hides himself from the peasants. The second keg arrives. Then another keg arrives on a cart or carriage. Neydthart has secretly removed its bottom and slipped within. The peasants, alarmed, stand in their places.

Ennglmayer: Ennglmayer, standing alone, says:

Ho, ho! The Elder Neydthart is here.
I knew it when first I heard him speak.
We must . . . etc.

So Ennglmayer returns to his neighbors.

Peasant Rümpolt: Then the First Peasant, Rümpolt, steps forth and speaks:

Neydthart thinks he is well hidden.
He shall find . . . etc.

Sauffnwein: Then the Second Peasant, Sauffnwein, steps forth and says to his companions:

Sauffnwein is my name.
Listen, my dear companions,
I tell you . . . etc.

Sauffnwein's wife goes to him and says:

262 Sauffnwein, take my advice,
You should fight no more today.
It is true . . . etc.

Jäcl kolwitz: Jäcl Kolwitz stands forth and says:

Jäcl Kolwitz is my name.
In my vest I often sweat.
If I . . . etc.

Clara: Clara steps before her husband and says:

My good husband, I tell you this,
I knew for a long time
Of Neydthart's . . . etc.

Ennglmayer's Son: Then Ennglmayer's Son stands forth and answers her:

Mother, what drunken talk is that?
My father's place is here by me,
And you also . . . etc.

Then the peasants back and stab the keg, but Neydthart secretly has left. Here put something within the cask which would produce a noise.

Ennglmayer: Then Ennglmayer speaks to his neighbors:

Listen, dear neighbors,
All those from Zeislmaur,
What we . . . etc.

Everyone to his place: Then everyone returns to his place in the order in which he came in. And the Prologue stands in the middle of the barricades and says:

Now hear this, all young and old,
Poor and rich.
We have had here a play,
Wherein much has been said,
And though at length Neydthart came to die,

Yet his name does not wane,
For he left many children behind.
Those who do hateful deeds
Rarely gain much from them,
As one now must know.
Here ends our play.
Pipe up you players, quickly now!

So they pipe up and join with the procession

which leaves in the same way it came in.

BIBLIOGRAPHY

Books

Adams, Joseph Quincey, ed. Chief Pre-Shakespearian Dramas. Boston, 1924.

d'Ancona, Alessandro. Origini del Teatro Italiano. Turin, 1891.

Barnett, H. G. Innovation: The Basis of Cultural Change. New York, 1953.

Barraclough, Geoffrey. Origins of Modern Germany. Oxford, 1949.

Barton, Lucy. Historic Costume for the Stage. Boston, 1963.

Bell, Clair Hayden. Peasant Life in Old German Epics. New York, 1931.

Bernheimer, Richard. The Wild Man in the Middle Ages. Cambridge, Mass., 1952.

Bloch, Marc. Feudal Society. Chicago, 1961.

_____ French Rural History. tr. Janet Sondheimer. Berkeley, 1966.

Bohannon, Paul. Social Anthropology. New York, 1965.

Boor, H. de. Die höfische Literatur. München, 1953.

_____ Geschichte der deutschen Literatur. München, 1962.

Bramsted, Ernest F. Aristocracy and the Middle Classes in Germany. Chicago, 1964.

Brockett, Oscar G. History of the Theatre. Boston, 1968.

Brooke, Christopher. Europe in the Central Middle Ages. New York, 1964.

Borcherdt, Hans H. Das Europäische Theater. Leipzig, 1935.

Cantor, Norman F. Medieval History. New York, 1963.

Carpenter, W. S. and P. T. Stafford. ed. Readings in Early Legal Institutions. New York, 1932.

Chambers, E. K. The English Folk Play. London, 1933.

_____ The Medieval Stage. Oxford, 1903.

Collingwood, R. G. The Idea of History. Oxford, 1946.

Cook, Victor Renard. "The Neidhart Plays: An Analysis and Translation of Three Medieval German Folk Dramas." Master's Thesis. University of Florida, 1964.

Cornford, Francis Macdonald. The Origin of Attic Comedy. Cambridge, 1934.

Craig, Hardin. English Religious Drama of the Middle Ages. London, 1960.

Crane, R. S. The Languages of Criticism and Structure of Poetry. Toronto, 1953.

Creizenach, Wilhelm. Geschichte des neueren Dramas. Halle, A.S., 1893.

Cross, T. P. and W. A. Nitze. Lancelot and Guenevere. Chicago, 1930.

Davis, William Sterns. Life on a Medieval Barony. New York, 1923.

Dolmetsch, Mabel. Dances of England and France from 1540 to 1600. London, 1949.

Eis, Gerhardt. Altdeutsche Handschriften. München, 1949.

Ehrismann, Gustav. Geschichte der deutschen Literatur bis zum Ausgang des Mittelalters. München, 1922.

Engels, Frederick. The Peasant War in Germany. New York, 1926.

Erikson, Kai T. The Wayward Puritans. New York, 1966.

Fehrle, Eugen. Deutsche Fest und Jahresbrauche. Leipzig, 1936.

Ferguson, Wallace K. Europe in Transition. Boston, 1960.

Firth, Raymond. Elements of Social Organization. Boston, 1951

Frank, Grace. The Medieval French Drama. Oxford, 1954.

Franke, Kuno. A History of German Literature. 4th ed. New York, 1901.

_____ Personality in German Literature before Luther. Cambridge, Mass., 1916.

_____ Social Forces in German Literature. 3rd ed. New York, 1899.

Frazer, James G. The New Golden Bough. ed. Theodor H. Gaster. New York, 1961.

Freytag, Gustav. The Technique of Drama. 5th ed. tr. Elias J. MacEwan. Chicago, 1894.

Freud, Sigmund and Oppenheim, D. E. Dreams in Folklore. New York, 1958.

Gautier, Leon. Chivalry. tr. D. C. Dunning. London, 1965.

_____ Histoire de la Poesie Liturgique: les Tropes. Paris, 1886.

Ghurye, G. S. Family and Kin in Indo-Europe Culture. Bombay, 1962.

Grimm, Jacob and Wilhelm. Deutsches Wörterbuch. Leipzig, 1854.

Grimm, Jacob. Mythology. tr. James Steven Stallybrass. London, 1882-88.

Hardison, O. B. Christian Rite and Christian Drama in the Middle Ages, Baltimore, 1965.

Hatto, A. T. and R. J. Taylor. The Songs of Neidhart von Reuental. Manchester, 1958.

Haupt, Moriz. Neidhart's Lieder. 2nd ed. rev. by Edmund Wiessner. Leipzig, 1923.

Hauser, Arnold. The Philosophy of Art History. New York, 1959.

_____ The Social History of Art. New York, 1951.

Hayakawa, S. I. Symbol, Status, and Personality. New York, 1963.

Huizinga, J. The Waning of the Middle Ages. Garden City, New York, 1954.

Hunningher, Benjamin. The Origin of the Theatre. New York, 1961.

Jacobs, Melville. The Content and Style of an Oral Literature. Chicago, 1959.

_____ Patterns in Cultural Anthropology. Homewood, Illinois, 1954.

Jenks, Edward. Law and Politics in the Middle Ages. New York, 1908.

Jones, George Fenwick. Honor in German Literature. Chapel Hill, 1959.

Kennedy, Douglas. England's Dances. London, 1950.

Kindermann, Heinz. Theater Geschichte Europas. Salzburg, 1957.

Lenski, Gerhard E. Power and Privilege. New York, 1966.

Lévi-Strauss, Claude. Structural Anthropology. tr. Claire Jacobson and Brooke Grundfest Schoepf. New York, 1963.

Lexer, Mathias von. Mittelhochdeutsches Handwörterbuch. Leipzig, 1872-78.

Lyon, Bryce D. From Fief to Indenture. Cambridge, Mass., 1957.

MacGowan, K. and W. Melnitz. The Living Stage. New York, 1955.

Mantzius, Karl. A History of Theatrical Art. New York, 1937.

McHugh, Peter. Defining the Situation. Indianapolis, 1968.

McLaughlin, Edward Tompkins. Studies in Medieval Life and Literature. New York, 1894.

Merker, Paul and Wolfgang Stammler. Reallexikon der deutschen Literaturgeschichte. Berlin, 1955.

Merton, Robert K. Social Theory and Social Structure. Glencoe, Illinois, 1957.

Meschke, Kurt. Schwerttanz und Schwerttanzspiel im germanischen Kulter Kreis. Leipzig, 1931.

Murray, Henry. ed. Myth and Myth Making. New York, 1960.

Nicoll, Allardyce. Masks, Mimes, and Miracles. New York, 1931.

_____ The Theory of Drama. New York, 1966.

Painter, Sidney. Medieval Society. Ithaca, New York, 1951.

Parker, John Henry. Domestic Architecture of the Middle Ages. Oxford, 1859.

Phillpotts, Bertha Surtees. Kindred and Clan. Cambridge, Mass., 1913.

Praz, Mario. An Illustrated History of Furnishing. New York, 1964.

Raglin, Lord. The Hero. London, 1949.

Redfield, Robert. Peasant Society and Culture. Chicago, 1956.

Reich, Hermann. Der Mimus. Berlin, 1903.

Rokeach, Milton. Beliefs, Attitudes and Values. San Francisco, 1968.

Rudwin, Maximilian. The Origin of the German Carnival Comedy. New York, 1920.

Sachs, Curt. The World History of Dance. tr. Bessie Schönberg. New York, 1952.

Sayce, Olive. Poets of the Minnesang. Oxford, 1967.

Schroeder, Leopold von, Mysterium und Mimus im Rigveda. Leipzig, 1908.

Seebohm, Frederick. Tribal Custom in Anglo-Saxon Law. London, 1911.

Singer, Samuel. Neidhart Studien. Tübingen, 1920.

Skinner, Charles M. Myths and Legends of Flowers, Trees, and Plants.

Southern, Richard. The Medieval Theatre in the Round. London, 1957.

Speirs, John. Medieval English Poetry. London, 1957.

Strassburg, Gottfried von. Tristan und Isolt. ed. August Closs. Oxford, 1958.

Stephenson, Carl. Medieval Feudalism. Ithaca, N. Y., 1942.

Strayer, Joseph Reese and Dana C. Munro. The Middle Ages. 4th ed. New York, 1959.

Stumpfl, Robert. Kultspiele der Germanen als Ursprung des Mittelalterlichen Dramas. Berlin, 1936.

Sumberg, Samuel. L. The Nuremberg Schembart Carnival. New York, 1941.

Tacitus, Cornelius. Works. tr. Arthur Murphy. New York, 1855.

Tawney, R. H. Religion and the Rise of Capitalism. New York, 1952.

Thomas, W. I. Social Behavior and Personality. ed. Edmund H. Volkart. New York, 1951.

Thompson, E. A. The Early Germans. Oxford, 1965.

Thompson, James Westfall. Economic and Social History of Europe in the Later Middle Ages. New York, 1960.

_____ Feudal Germany. Chicago, 1928.

_____ The Literacy of the Laity in the Middle Ages. New York, 1960.

Vernaleken, Theodor. Alpen Sagen. Wien, 1858.

Walshe, M. O'C. Medieval German Literature. Cambridge, Mass., 1962.

Weiss, Karl. Geschichte der Stadt Wien. Wien, 1882.

Wickham, Glynne. Early English Stages. London, 1963.

Wiessner, Edmund. Kommentar zu Neidhart's Lieder. Wien, 1954.

_____ Vollstandiges Wörterbuch zu Neidhart's Lieder. Wien, 1954.

_____ Die Lieder Neidharts. Wien, 1930.

Wolf, Eric R. Peasants. Englewood Cliffs, N. J., 1963.

Young, Frank W. Initiation Ceremonies: A Cross Cultural Study of Status Dramatization. Indianapolis, 1965.

Young, Karl. The Drama of the Medieval Church. Oxford, 1933.

Zatzikhoven, Ulrich von. Lanzelet. ed. Austin P. Evans. New York, 1951.

Monographs

Bartsch, Karl. ed. Meisterlieder in Bibliothek des litterarischen Vereins. LXVIII. Stuttgart, 1862.

Bobertag, Felix. ed. Narrenbuch in Deutsche National Litteratur. XI. Stuttgart, 1885.

_____ Volksbucher in Deutsche National Litteratur. XXV. Stuttgart, 1890.

Gudde, Erwin Gustav. Social Conflicts in Medieval German Poetry in University of California Publications in Modern Philology. XVIII. Berkeley, 1934.

Gusinde, Konrad. Neidhart mit dem Veilchen in Germanistische Abhandlung. XVII. Breslau, 1899.

Heinzel, Richard. Abhandlungen zum altdeutschen Drama in Akademie der Wissenshaften: Sitzungsbericht der philosophisch-historische Classe. CXXXIV. Wien, 1896.

HÜgli, Hilde. Der deutsche Bauer im Mittelalter in Sprache und Dichtung XLII. Bern, 1929.

Keller, Adelbert von. Fastnachtspiele aus dem fünfzenhnten Jahrhundert in Bibliothek des litterarischen Vereins. XXVII, XXIX, XXX. Stuttgart, 1853.

Koesterman, Erich. ed. P. Cornelii Tacitus in Bibliotheca Scriptorum Craecoum et Romanorum Teuberniana. Teubner, 1961.

Pfeiffer, Franz and F. Fellner. ed. Die Weingartner Lieder Handschift in Bibliothek des literarischen Vereins. V. Stuttgart, 1843.

Wittenweiller, Heinrich, Ring in Deutsche Literatur. ed. Edmund Wiessner. Leipzig, 1931.

Zingerle, Oswald. Die Sterzinger Spiele in Wiener Neudrucke. IX, XI. Wien, 1886.

Zucker, A. E. ed. The Redentin Easter Play in Record of Civilization: Sources and Studies. XXXII. New York, 1941.

Articles

Adolf, Helen. "On Medieval Laughter" in Speculum, XXII (1947), 251-253.

Ammann, J. J. "Nachträge zum Schwerttanz" in Zeitschrift für deutsches Altertum, XXXIV (1890), 178-210.

Bascom, William R. "The Four Functions of Folklore" in The Study of Folklore. ed. Alan Dundes. Englewood Cliffs, N. J., 1965.

Berelson, Bernard. "Content Analysis" in Handbook of Social Psychology. ed. Gardner Lindzey. Reading, Mass., 1954.

Brooks, Neil C. Review of Kultspiele der Germanen by Robert Stumpfl in Journal of English and Germanic Philology, XXXVII (1938), 300-305.

Cook, Victor R. "Lord Raglan's Hero: A Cross-Cultural Critique" in The Florida Anthropologist, XVIII (September, 1965), 147-154.

Count, Earl W. "Myth as World View" in Culture in History. ed. Stanley Diamond. New York, 1960.

Dentler, Robert A. and Kai T. Erickson. "The Functions of Deviance in Groups" in Social Problems, VII (1959), 98-107.

Evans, Blakemore. "The Staging of the Donaueshingen Passion Play" in Modern Language Review, XV (1920), 65-76, 279-297.

Fifield, Merle. "The Arena Theatres in Vienna Codices" in Comparative Drama, XI (Winter, 1968-69), 259-282.

Haertal, Martin H. "Social Conditions in Southern Bavaria as shown in Meir Helmbrecht" in Transactions of the Wisconsin Academy of Sciences, Arts and Letters, XVII (1914), 1057-1072.

Hintner, F. "Beiträge zur Kritik der deutschen Neidhartspiele des 14 und 15 Jahrhunderts" in Jahresbericht des Städt. Gymnasiums, Wels, 1903-07.

Huebner, Rudolf. "Man, Right, and Association" in Anthropology and Early Law. ed. Lawrence Krader. New York, 1966.

Kluckhohn, Clyde. "Myth and Rituals: A General Theory" in The Harvard Theological Review, XXXV (1942), 45-79.

Levi-Strauss, Claude. "Four Winnebago Myths" in Culture in History. ed. Stanley Diamond. New York, 1960.

Malinowski, Bronislav. "The Group and Individual in Functional Analysis" in American Journal of Sociology, XLIV (May, 1939), 938-964.

Mead, George Herbert. "The Psychology of Punitive Justice" in American Journal of Sociology, VIII (1918), 571-602.

Merton, Robert K. "Anomia and Social Interaction" in Anomie and Deviant Behavior. ed. Marshall B. Clinard. New York, 1964.

Meyer, Richard M. "Die Neidhartlegende" in Zeitschrift für deutsches Litteratur, XXXI 91887), 64-82.

Pascal, R. "On the Origins of the Liturgical Drama of the Middle Ages" in Modern Language Review, XXXVI (1941), 369-387.

Sandbach, F. E. Review of Kultspiele der Germanen by Robert Stumpfl in Modern Language Review, XXXII (1937), 317-322.

Schönbach, Anton E. "Ein altes Neidhartspiel" in Zeitschrift für deutsches Altertum, XL (1896), 368-374.

Strayer, Joseph Reese. "The Development of Feudal Institutions" in Twelfth Century Europe and the Foundations of Modern Society. ed. Marshall Claggett. Madison, Wisc., 1961.

Stumpfl, Robert. "Die Bühnenmöglichkeiten im 16 Jh. "in Zeitschrift für deutsche Philologie, LIV (1929-30), 42-80.

Tatlock, J. S. P. "Medieval Laughter" in Speculum, XXI (1946), 289-294.

Turner, Victor W. "Myth and Symbol" in The International Encyclopedia of the Social Sciences. ed. David L. Sills. New York, 1968.

Winterfeld, Paul von. "Rhythmen und Sequenzen Studien" in Zeitschrift für deutsches Altertum, XVL (1907), 133-149.

Wolfram, Richard. "Sword Dances and Secret Societies" in Journal of English Folk Dance and Song, I (1932), 34-41.

BIOGRAPHICAL SKETCH

Victor Renard Cook was born in Parsons, Kansas, on December 14, 1937. He attended the public schools of East St. Louis, Illinois, and graduated from East St. Louis High School, January, 1956. He attended Southern Illinois University at Carbondale, Illinois, for one year, then he enlisted in the United States Army. While in the service he attended the Army Language School for the year 1958, where he studied Czech. Subsequently he was stationed in Europe as a member of the Army Security Agency. In 1963, he graduated from Southern Illinois University with the degree of Bachelor of Science in Theatre. In 1965, he received a Master of Arts degree in speech from the University of Florida. Thereafter, he taught for three years in the state university systems of New York and North Carolina.

Chief among his non-academic accomplishments are his marriage to Jennifer West Cook and their subsequent adoption of an infant son, Kelly Renard Cook.

This dissertation was prepared under the direction of the chairman of the candidate's supervisory committee and has been approved by all members of that committee. It was submitted to the Dean of the College of Arts and Sciences and to the Graduate Council, and was approved as partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of Doctor of Philosophy.

August, 1969

E. Rollin Jones

Dean, College of Arts and Sciences

Dean, Graduate School

Supervisory Committee:

Chairman

Paul Moore